19 - STALKING WITH THE DOUBLE

(Unpublished Manuscript)

1996 - Taisha Abelar. Picks up a year after the events of 1968-1969, which were covered in The Sorcerer's Crossing - © 1992.

Stalking with the *Double*

by
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Book 19 – STALKING WITH THE DOUBLE

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(*clickable/tappable*)

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Author's Note

In my previous work, The Sorcerers' Crossing, I describe being ushered into the sorcerers' tradition by a woman named Clara Mendez. She belonged to a group of sorcerers led by don Juan Matus. My training under their auspices consisted of two parts: first, I had to perform a thorough recapitulation of my life, using a specific breathing method to recover trapped energy from the past, and second, I was taught a series of sorcery passes; movements and postures designed to reinforce the *energy body* or the *double*.

After a failed attempt to meet the other members of don Juan's party by means of a deliberate manipulation of perception, referred to as the *sorcerers' crossing*, I was given further instruction in order to stabilize my *energy body*. To this effect, I spent many months in a tree house in a grove of trees located somewhere to the front of Clara's house. This phase of my training was guided by the caretaker, Emilito. He started me on another *recapitulation*, and had me perform certain *gazing* techniques, as well as perfect my tree climbing skills, and certain *dreaming* and *stalking* maneuvers too complex for me to fully comprehend at that time.

When my *energy body* had familiarized itself with a new perceptual configuration, a new "being-in-the-world", Emilito suggested that I return to Los Angeles to continue my academic training. He assured me that this was necessary in order to balance the right and left sides of my being, and to hone the control required to continue on the sorcerer's path.

Chapter 1: The Meaning of Life

The lecture on anthropological research methods had left many questions unanswered for me. After the lecture, later that afternoon, I paid the teaching assistant a visit in order to clarify some points raised by the professor. When I entered the office, I found the teaching assistant at his desk eating pistachio nuts. He was deliberately aiming the shells out the window at unsuspecting students on the lawn below. I had once been sitting on the building's steps, under that very window, when something had landed on the top of my head. I thought that pigeons were roosting in the rooftop crannies, but I discovered, upon closer inspection, that what had hit me was not pigeon droppings, but pistachio nut shells. Now I understood where those shells were coming from.

“This one is a real ‘poor baby,’” I thought, watching Rex Jones turn red at being caught at his tricks. He had a sheepish grin and a boyish demeanor and the overall sense which Clara Mendez referred to as the “poor baby syndrome”. She pointed out that all of us were operating under the social and psychological command that we had to regard ourselves and present ourselves at all times, if possible, in the light of “poor baby, me.” At the time she told me this, I resented it immensely and argued the point, but after a soulful examination, I had to admit that I myself loved to be regarded as a poor baby. Not only this, but I had not come across anyone who did not fall into that category.

“I hope I’m not disturbing you,” I said to Rex Jones, “but today’s lecture brought up some points I would like to discuss with you. That is, if you’re not too busy.”

With a thrust of his leg, Rex Jones pushed his swivel chair away from the window.

“How can I help you?” he said pointing to a chair. I noticed he took in an eyeful of the rising hemline of my skirt as I sat down.

“I don’t understand how anthropologists can know what is going on in a foreign culture when they don’t even speak the language?” I said pulling my skirt down over my knees.

Rex Jones smiled nervously, but the nervous twitch of his pale cheek betrayed impatience. “Anthropologists practice a method called, ‘participant observation,’” he said, hammering on his words. He glanced at his watch to gauge how much time he had before his office hour was over. “The anthropologist fieldworker participates in the activities of the society he's studying; he takes copious notes; he tape records and photographs everything pertinent, which, upon returning from the field, he analyzes within the framework of his theory. In other words, he uses his data to prove the hypothesis he has set out to test.”

“Are you saying that the anthropologist already knows what kind of data he wants to isolate before he goes to the field?” I asked. “Isn't that being biased?”

Rex Jones gave his chair a little swivel toward the desk and put on his wire rimmed glasses, carefully adjusting them over each ear.

“That isn't bias; it's his modus operandi. If Anthropology is to be a science,” he continued, leaning towards me, “it must follow the scientific method, which is hypothesis testing. His findings must be open to verification.”

“Meaning what?” I asked.

“Meaning that another fieldworker collecting the same data under similar circumstances would obtain the same results.”

“But what about Lewis and Redfield in Tepotzlan?” I asked.

I was referring to the classic case in which two fieldworkers doing research in the same rural community in Mexico had obtained dramatically different results, thereby showing that replication, although theoretically advisable, might not be feasible in actual practice.

“That was a special case,” Rex Jones conceded. “It only proves that the researchers weren't looking at the same things, or documenting their work carefully enough, and that’s precisely my point: Social Science entails careful documentation.”

I reminded him how difficult it was for two people in our own culture to agree about a given issue, even though the issue was familiar to both of them; a condition which made agreement about issues of a foreign culture nearly miraculous.

“Anthropologists are people before they are scientists?” I pointed out. “So, while they are participating and observing, wouldn’t they also be emotionally involved in a life where everything is strange? Wouldn’t they have feelings, opinions, and interpret events according to their past experiences?”

Images of the cave in Northern Mexico, where I had spent many months reliving my own past experiences in a process called the “*recapitulation*”, came to mind. I remembered how difficult it had been for Clara Mendez, my teacher, and I to reach an agreement about anything, including what she had meant by the “poor baby” syndrome. She was departing from the inconceivable viewpoint of what she referred to as the sorcery tradition, and I saw everything from the predictable vantage point of my middle-class upbringing. We had heated arguments in her kitchen; disagreements in which we were talking at cross purposes, not seeing the world in the same terms at all.

Rex Jones chuckled condescendingly at my moment of introspection, which he seemed to interpret as confusion. “You’re missing the point,” he said shaking his head. “That’s precisely why anthropologists need to follow a strict methodology decided upon beforehand. Fieldworkers must refrain from making subjective interpretations and stick to recording objective facts. Look at the sociologists downstairs.”

He was referring to the department of demographers who had their offices on the second floor. At one point in the history of the university, Anthropology had been a part of the Sociology department, but now they prided themselves in being independent, but not too independent, it seemed, when it came to methodology. It was partially the fear of becoming a hardened actuary, that had made me select Anthropology as a major. It still had an air of romanticism to it, a certain sense of adventure surviving from the nineteenth century travelers' accounts in which modern-day Anthropology has it's roots. Despite the field workers' efforts to categorize everything via the scientific method, Anthropology still had the potential for exploring the unknown, of crossing conceptual boundaries.

"What about the sociologists?" I asked clicking my pen to the open position in case I had to take notes.

"Sociology, as we know, depends on how reliable it's data collection techniques are and on the ability to verify it's findings. That's why they use statistical analysis, surveys, in-depth interviews, to ensure replication. Anthropology must copy their methodology because verification is even more important in our discipline, where, as you yourself have pointed out, everything is strange."

I noticed Rex's roving eye dart at my legs again. I gave him a fierce look that Clara Mendez, the champion of women, would have been proud of. I had always assumed the vulnerable state of women was a natural condition resulting from our biological makeup, but Clara had set the record straight from the outset.

"Biology my foot," she had said. "Licking men's balls and being their servants is the not the result of any biology, but of the mesmeric commands of our male-dominated culture."

I was shocked to hear her say that at the time, and it was only after months of listening to Clara's sermons about the plight of women, and immersing myself in the practice called the *recapitulation*, that I began to see more clearly the pitiful position society has allocated for the female species. It was obvious that we women had to fight twice as hard as men to succeed in anything we did. Once in our own right, and once again to overcome the powerful predispositions thrust upon us by our male culture. One of the reasons for attending the university and cultivating the intellect, I was told, was to be able to grasp and evaluate for myself the taken-for-granted views of the role of women, and in so doing, free myself from their mesmeric grip.

"A stranger coming to 'study' culture, which is an abstraction," I said picking up the thread of our argument, "could work in the field for years without ever realizing that he is

misunderstanding what he sees or what the people are doing. It has happened to countless researchers and to Peace Corps workers."

"The Anthropologists and Peace Corps workers I know are pretty astute," Rex said. "They know when someone is bullshitting them."

"What if the anthropologist wants to help the people he is living with?" I proposed. "What if he or she gets so involved in the culture, that it is impossible for him or her to remain objective?"

I was thinking of events that had happened under the tutelage of Clara and her colleagues, and of how I would never be able to explain their worldview adequately using the theories of anthropology or the scientific method.

"Then he or she is no longer an anthropologist," said Rex raising a bushy eyebrow. "He or she is simply a social worker or a do-gooder, or worse yet, has gone native."

To bring his point home, he cited several cases in which the anthropologist had "gone native." The first incident involved a researcher working among the Navajo Indians, While studying the Peyote Cult, using the method of participant observation, he ingested far too many peyote buttons to remain objective. He had visions of the Great Spirit, received countless messages, and when he came out of his hallucinogenic state, he started his own religion.

"And don't forget the case of Beth Wassermann, a field worker in Samoa," Rex reminded me reaching for his pipe.

"Was she one of Boas's students, like Margaret Mead?"

He shook his head, I had the distinct feeling that he was pulling my leg.

"What about Beth Wassermann?" I ventured.

"She went to Samoa to collect data for her doctoral dissertation on sexual customs and marriage rites. She put aside her objectivity and 'participated' far too much more than was necessary, if you catch my drift."

Rex made a lewd gesture that left no doubt as to the nature of Ruth Wassermann's participation among the Samoans.

"What happened to her?" I asked, certain that the story would not end well.

“She fell in love with a Polynesian prince,” Rex said shaking the stem of his pipe at me as if he were scolding a child. “She broke the taboos and the witch doctor put a curse on her. She nearly died in childbirth, if the minister hadn't intervened with his white magic. Beth left the islands in disgrace and never finished her research.”

Silence fell upon the room. Rex looked at me to assess my reaction.

“I'm still not convinced,” I said doggedly. “It seems to me that the whole approach to anthropology is wrong. You have to do more than merely observe to understand anything. You have to become involved.”

Rex took his pipe out of his mouth, turned it over and tapped it on the edge of an ashtray. Nothing fell out. I realized he was using the pipe as a placebo to help him stop smoking or perhaps to make him appear more distinguished.

“You don’t have to taste an apple to know that it's red,” he reminded me.

“But how do you know what an apple tastes like unless you bite into it?” I countered. “If you go to the field already burdened with a bag of hypotheses, you’re not really being open to the experiences, which is the whole point of anthropology: the study of man, what he believes in, how he feels, how he thinks, how he relates to the universe.

Rex smacked his lips and stuck the pipe back into his mouth. He seemed to have come to the end of his patience.

“You’re asking questions that belong to the domain of philosophy. If you want to know about the meaning of life, you’re in the wrong department. Although my friend Carlos might be able to answer some of your questions. He’s an apprentice to a Mexican shaman.”

Upon hearing his name, the teaching assistant sitting at an adjacent desk put down the book he was reading and turned to face Rex.

“She wants to know about the meaning of life,” Rex said. “I’ll be damned if I can answer her questions, so I'll leave her in your hands.”

He glanced at his watch again. “Besides, I’m late. I have to drive all the way to Gardenia.”

Rex stuffed some examination papers into his briefcase and hurriedly left the room.

“What’s so pressing in Gardenia?” I asked, turning my chair to face Carlos.

“Rex likes to gamble,” Carlos said in a hushed tone. “And Gardenia is the only place near here where it’s legal. Mark my words, one of these days he'll gamble away his research grant to Nepal.”

Carlos had black curly hair, a smiling friendly face, and a mischievous sparkle in his dark shiny eyes. I had the unsettling feeling that I had seen him before; not just in the Anthropology department, but somewhere else and that we were united by an invisible bond, but try as I might, I could not remember where or when we had met.

Carlos leaned forward and looked at me intently as if he, too, had experienced a kind of deja vu. “Haven’t we met before?” he said obviously aware of the cliche.

Even though he had taken the words right out of my mouth, it sounded so much like the classic line that I became defensive.

“You’ve probably seen me around the halls,” I said trying to sound casual. “Or in Hitchcock’s class.”

“Hmm. Perhaps,” he said giving me a pensive look.

His gaze actually held me the way hypnotists might grasp a patient.

“You’re much too young and pretty to worry about the meaning of life,” he said in a friendly tone. “You can’t be more than nineteen or twenty. Why not leave the weighty questions to the wizened philosophers?”

“I’m twenty two and I’m very much interested in the meaning of life,” I snapped, annoyed by what seemed to me a chauvinistic statement. “What’s the point to all this? There must be something more that makes life worth living than the bullshit we’ve gotten every day of our lives.”

As I spoke I gesticulated with my hands, knocking over a dish of paper clips on his desk. They scattered over his papers, but Carlos pretended not to notice.

“I respect your concerns,” he said leaning toward me. “It’s just that most people really aren’t interested in the meaning of anything except, perhaps, of love.”

“I disagree,” I said. “What about the seekers and meditators? They’re always searching for answers to life’s fundamental questions.”

“True, but in my opinion, the so called ‘gurus’ are not so much engaged in a bona fide philosophical inquiry, but in an attempt to intensify their experiences. They are looking for the meaning of life precisely because they are bored with life. If they would live life with gusto, they would not be so concerned with searching for it's meaning.”

I had a feeling he was including me in the category of those who lacked gusto in their lives.

“Come back in twenty years after you’ve lived and then we can talk about the meaning of life,” he said with a wink.

“In twenty years the entire world might be blown to bits!” I snapped. “Is that the intensity of experience you’re talking about?”

I realized from his pained expression that I was shouting. I don’t know why I had gotten so riled up. A cool gust of wind came in from the open window and ruffled the examination papers on Carlos’s desk. I took a deep breath to calm myself.

“If you really want to know about the meaning of life,” Carlos said, “you should meet this Yaqui Indian I’m working with. He knows a great deal about life and it's meaning. In fact he is one of the wisest people I’ve ever met. Perhaps we can go to Mexico some time and I’ll introduce you to him.”

Upon hearing this, I experienced an intense apprehension. I began to perspire. All my senses were on red alert. Perhaps Carlos was just making polite conversation, or maybe he was trying to proposition me with some sort of a trip. At any rate, I felt a deep uneasiness. Going to Mexico with Clara Mendez was one thing, but to go with a strange man was another. The worst part was that something inside me wanted to return to Mexico in the worst way.

I looked at Carlos, trying to discern his meaning, when for an instant, I thought he had shrunk and moved backwards in space. It was as if I were seeing him from the end of a long tunnel. I continued staring dumbfounded, and suddenly I recalled where I had seen him before. Once I had had a vision of a gathering of sorcerers in Mexico. One of them was a young latin man with dark curly hair that looked very much like the person talking to me now.

The more I looked at Carlos the more this secret suspicion grew inside me. With no rational

foundation, I became convinced that Carlos was the young man of my vision, the new *nagual*. I remembered being told that when power put us in contact, he would bring me to Mexico where I would meet the other members of the present *nagual's* party that were waiting for me. I tried recalling who these other members were, but I was certain that except for Clara, Nelida and a strange bird-like creature named Emilito, I had never met them. I was shocked to realize that my time in Los Angeles had almost obliterated their memory. My overwhelming concern with daily activities and my studies at the University, had created a wall of forgetfulness. The dull oblivion that surrounded me was so dense that the time I had spent in Mexico became vague and dreamlike, as if it had never happen.

Yet, of one thing, I was certain, I had been expressly commanded not to return to Mexico or search for anyone until power again opened the way, and when that moment came, I had to seize the quarter centimeter of chance power offered, or the door would close, perhaps never to open again. As a wave of memory swept over me, I felt my ears buzzing and experienced a profound dizziness. I wanted to run away, yet I heard myself saying, “I’d like to go to Mexico," in a voice that could hardly be my own, for it came from the distant end of that long tunnel.

I looked up and realized that Carlos was also confused. It was obvious from his expression, that he had not expected me to take his invitation seriously, let alone give him a definitive answer.

“Are you alright?” Carlos asked with genuine concern.

“I’m perfectly fine,” I said shaking my head to clear it, “It’s just so warm in here.”

As I regained my senses I told myself that I had gotten only a glimpse of a face, and that the vision of the *nagual's* party had been so fleeting I could have easily been mistaken about this young man. Most likely he wasn't the same person at all. Yet in spite of my rational doubts, I was driven by an unknown force. I had the certainty that if Carlos was the man in my vision, I could only find that out in Mexico; and if I didn’t act now, I would never get another chance.

“I do want to go to Mexico,” I repeated.

“Well, that would be great,” Carlos said uneasily, gathering up the paper clips I had spilled, "We’ll do that sometime.”

“I really want to go. When would be a good time?”

“I go to Sonora every other weekend," Carlos said hesitantly.

“All right. How about next weekend. I’ll be through with my exams by then.”

“Wooow, not so fast,” Carlos said trying to back off. “Don’t you think we should go to a movie or have dinner or something first, instead of rushing off to Mexico? After all we hardly know each other."

“Movies bore me, and I never eat in restaurants,” I said. “Besides, I’d like to meet this sorcerer informant, that you are working with. I promise I wouldn’t be in the way.”

I could tell Carlos was peeved by my insistence, but that his curiosity was also peaked. He seemed to be considering the possibilities, but then had a sudden change of heart.

“Really, I don’t think I could just spring someone on the old man,” he said. “Especially a young woman. Do you speak Spanish?”

"Yes, I do,” I lied without flinching.

He looked surprised. “It still isn’t a good idea. I don’t know why I brought it up in the first place. Let’s forget the whole thing.”

“It is a good idea!” I said enthusiastically. “Think of it as an appointment with destiny.”

Again Carlos hesitated.

“How about asking your informant if it’s all right to bring a friend from the University,” I suggested. “A fellow anthropology student. What harm is there in that. If he says, no, we’ll forget about it. It can’t hurt to ask. What do you have to lose?”

Carlos sighed with relief, as if he had found a way out. He was certain that his Yaqui Indian informant would not wish to meet a young woman from the United States.

“Alright, I’ll ask if I can bring someone,” he conceded. “If he agrees. I’ll call you and you can join me in Nogales.”

I wrote my phone number on a scrap of paper and handed it to him, I watched him slip it into his shirt pocket. As I left the room, I was certain he would never mention me to his Indian informant, let alone use the phone number. The following week, late at night, I received an unexpected phone call.

Chapter 2: Nogales

I looked at my watch; it was 5:53 A.M. I had driven straight from Los Angeles to Nogales, stopping only twice to refuel and to grab a bite to eat. Carlos had asked me to meet him at nine o'clock in front of the Greyhound bus depot, but I had given myself plenty of leeway in case the traffic was heavy or I had car trouble.

As I parked the car in an all-night parking lot near the bus depot, I wondered if I had made the right decision in coming. Carlos had sounded strange during the brief telephone conversation. It was as if he couldn't talk or was reluctant to do so. I could have easily misunderstood the time and place of our meeting. There had been a great deal of static on the line, with a Spanish speaking female voice interrupting. I had assumed it was the operator, but now I wasn't certain.

Despite the feeling of having met him before, I didn't really know Carlos and I wasn't familiar with Mexico, for I had never ventured beyond the vicinity of Clara's house. Rural Mexico was, to me, a hostile and rugged country where anything could happen to the unsuspecting traveler. Also, I had been exaggerating when I told Carlos that I spoke Spanish. The few classes I had taken at the University hadn't given me a command of the language. Once again, it seemed, I had jumped into a situation I was completely ill-equipped to handle.

The long drive had left me exhausted. I set the alarm of my wristwatch for eight thirty, then stretched out along the back seat to relax. With my eyes closed, I practiced some *recapitulating* breathing, a practice I had neglected to keep up. I wondered if by returning to Mexico, I would be able to better understand some of the inconceivable events that had taken place under the guidance of Clara and her group of sorcerers.

Those events now seemed so distant that trying to recall them filled me with a deep melancholy. My constant concern with myself and my daily activities had clouded my vision, and in spite of the months of *recapitulating* and the countless promises I had made to change, old ways and feelings had slowly crept back like crab grass, whose growth had been trimmed, but whose roots remained stubbornly intact.

Then sun beat down on my head when I awoke from a sound sleep. I had been *dreaming* I was gazing at leaves of the grove of trees in front of Clara's house. I experienced instant panic: it was nine thirty! The alarm had failed to go off, or if it did, I had not heard it! I feared I would

miss my appointment with destiny, and the long drive would have been for nothing. As usual, I had been careless, when I should have remained alert. On top of everything, the sun, shining through the car window, had given me a king-sized headache.

In my hasty departure, I neglected to bring a hat.

I locked the car door and headed for the bus depot where I joined the crowd of people milling about in a great hurry. Everyone was either going towards the border or had just crossed over and was rushing away from it. I nearly collided with a hunchbacked woman. When I heard crying, I realized that the woman wasn't hunchbacked at all; she was carrying a baby wrapped in a roboso tied to her back and shoulders. Not even the baby's head was visible, and I wondered how it could breathe.

I felt so sorry for the woman, that I gave her a ten dollar bill. She took it and smiled gratefully, flashing a silver front tooth. At the sight of money, I was instantly surrounded by a group of boys selling lottery tickets. They all insisted that I buy one or at least let them carry my bag. I bought a box of Chiclets from a girl in pigtails and hurried passed stands selling belts, ponchos and pottery figurines.

I wanted to buy some bananas, for the last meal I had eaten was a meatloaf sandwich at Gila Bend, but I didn't dare take the time. I needed to get to the Greyhound bus depot in a hurry. Cars were parked or stopped in every available space and everyone seemed to be honking at the same time. I stood on the street corner waiting for an opening to cross, when I saw Carlos in the distance, waving his hand. I couldn't tell if he was telling me to stay put or to meet him. I was so relieved to see him that I hurried across the street, stopping a few cars in the process.

At close range, Carlos looked different. His clothes smelled of mesquite wood smoke. At the University he wore tailored slacks and sports coats. Now he had on Levis, a long sleeved khaki shirt and hiking boots. He had a kind of energy and agility that made him stand out from the crowd. Something in the way he balanced his weight on the balls of his feet, gave the impression of an athlete with superb control over his movement.

"I suppose you thought I wasn't going to show up," I said to break the awkwardness.

"You're right. I was beginning to wonder if you were coming. How was the drive?"

"I was in a daze through most of it. Luckily there wasn't much traffic. I would have been on time, but I fell asleep."

“My god. Did you have an accident?”

“No, I woke up in the nick of time, but that’s the reason I’m late.”

He gave me a confused look. I realized that he had thought I had fallen asleep at the wheel while driving rather than in the back seat.

“To be perfectly frank,” I said quickly, “I didn’t expect to hear from you.”

“Me too,” Carlos said, taking my bag. “I was surprised when I was told to call you.”

“Who told you to call me?”

“The Yaqui Indian I am working with.”

Carlos explained that true to his promise he had mentioned to his informant, that he had met a student at the University and that he had invited her to come to Mexico.

“My informant wanted me to tell him in detail the circumstances of our meeting,” Carlos continued.

“What did you tell him?”

“I described to him how Rex Jones got fed up with your questioning and handed you over to me. Apparently that was an omen.”

“What do you mean by an omen?”

“Don Juan said that things never come to us directly; that there always has to be an usher who opens the door, and that if we didn’t jump at that precise instant, the door would close and we would never know what might have been.”

Carlos looked at me seriously.

“You mean Rex Jones is some sort of an usher?” I asked, confused.

He nodded. “According to don Juan, mysterious forces were at work. Something in me had voiced an invitation to bring you to Mexico, and something in you jumped to accept it. That could only mean one thing.”

“What was that?” I wondered if it wasn’t the one thing that is on every man’s mind where an over night trip with a woman is concerned.

Carlos took my arm to help me around an open manhole in the sidewalk.

“It means,” he explained, “that at one level, we were both aware of the importance of the moment. It also means that power had opened the way, and that we have to be impeccable in order to travel under it's auspices. In other words, we are in the hands of power moving through an open door.”

A cold shiver ran up my back. I was afraid I was not prepared for such a journey.

“From now on, neither you nor I are in charge of what will happen,” Carlos continued. “Whatever may happen after we cross the border, falls within the designs of power. In other words, something besides your or I will be calling the shots.” He gave me a penetrating look. “Are you up to it?”

Before I could reply, we found ourselves at the border checkpoint. Carlos told me that he had left his car on the other side, and that he would cross over and wait for me in Mexico. He showed me which form I needed to fill out and which door I would be passing through to enter Mexico. He handed me my bag then left through that same doorway and disappeared around the corner of the building.

I didn’t like being left alone. I envisioned it as a test to see if I could make it across on my own. Or perhaps, Carlos thought I spoke enough Spanish that I didn't need him to translate. While I waited in line, I began assessing my situation, I was about to embark on a journey with someone I had seen in a vision; on a quest for power in a manner that could only be called, “following the designs of the spirit.” Carlos had made it clear from the outset that we would not be on a vacation, but under the auspices of power. I didn't know what “power” meant, but I knew that it was too abstract a concept for precise definitions. On such a journey, all one could do was to acquiesce, and follow it's illusive course.

As I mulled things over, I had the distinct feeling I was being watched. Perhaps Nelida or Mr. Abelar were among the Mexicans that had lined up to cross the border. It had been many months since I had seen them, but I was certain I would recognize them, especially Emilito, who often visited me in dreams. He had big owl-like eyes, that blinked as he stared vacantly. I would wake up in the middle of the night and find him standing by my bedside. Then he would vanish before I could talk to him.

I heard raspy coughing behind me. I turned around, just in time to see an old man drop a huge glob of saliva onto the floor. I cringed, nauseated. I would have moved away but in front of me was a woman holding an infant whose runny nose was making tracks on his face. He was trying to grab my hair with his sticky fists. I recognized the tattered magenta raboso; it was the same woman I had bumped into as I had hurried to the Greyhound bus depot. She smiled at me in recognition and said something in rapid Spanish which I didn't understand. I smiled back dumbly nodding.

It was hot and stuffy and I felt dizzy, but I didn't dare to go to the door for fear of losing my place in line. I reached inside my purse for a scented handkerchief and waved it in front of my face with a devil may care attitude. Rather than leaving me room, the man behind me crowded forward as the line progressed. I felt another wave of nausea flood me and became totally judgmental.

I rationalized my feelings of superiority as an attempt to balance my physical distress. I realized that these were dangerous feelings to have. During the long hours of recounting my life, I had discovered that I had been surrounded by people who felt intrinsically superior to everyone else. Their superiority was based on nothing but false reasoning, just as was mine, I had simply copied their feelings to perfection. I kept telling myself that I was not a part of the scene, but was a student of anthropology, a person of cultured European ancestry, who was there to do research, not be touched by the poverty and filth that pervaded the place.

In the midst of my emotional buttressing, I experienced a profound feeling of dejection as I realized that months of *recapitulating* meant nothing when confronted with discomfort and a lack of control wherein my idea of the myself was threatened. What was worse, I saw now, was that the power to imbue the self with worth comes from an unshakable core that we all have: the feeling, or rather the certainty, that we are special and above reproach.

I moved forward to put distance between myself and the old man behind me, of whom I kept catching glimpses from the corner of my eye. He seemed to be inwardly laughing at my discomfort, and that made me even more annoyed. For distraction, I opened my purse and took out the gold pen Clara had loaned me to make my *recapitulation* list; a list of names of all the people I had ever encountered during my lifetime. It had been a long list and I had come to consider the pen as my own possession. Clara had said it had belonged to one of the members of the *nagual's* party, although she had never said who that person was. When I returned to Los Angeles, I took the pen with me and used it to take my examinations at the University. If I did not have my "power" pen with me, I always felt I did poorer on the exams.

I filled out the tourist card but before I could return the pen to my purse, the old man behind me butted up against me and asked, “may I borrow your pen?”

Startled, to hear English spoken, I turned around to face him. He was old, but not decrepit; of medium height, with a wide flat nose, and oriental looking eyes. He had an air of familiarity about him as he smiled in a friendly manner.

I looked at his hands; they were dirty. I did not want to lend my power pen to a stranger who might contaminate it with weird energy, or worse yet, pocket it while I wasn’t looking. I wanted to say I didn’t have a pen but he had obviously seen me using it. Besides, outright lying was something I had trouble doing. The *recapitulation* had helped me realize that my reluctance to lie stemmed from several painful childhood incidents.

On one occasion, my mother had accused me of tracking mud onto her newly polished linoleum floor. I had had no trouble lying then, and I had accused my younger brother of dirtying up the floor, but when my mother found my muddy shoes under my bed, she made me apologize to my brother and to beg his forgiveness. I also had to go to bed without supper. Later, as I recapitulated this event, I realized that it had not been so much the dirty kitchen floor that had infuriated my mother, but the act of lying which was something well brought up girls simply ought not do.

I looked at the old man. As if sensing my preoccupation, he wiped his hands on the front of his shirt to clean them.

“It’s a beautiful pen,” he whispered leaning closer. “I will guard it carefully. Too many thieves around.”

I couldn’t tell if he was being facetious, but as if in a daze, I slowly handed him the pen. From the corner of my eye, I kept a close watch to make sure he didn’t pocket it. I sneaked a few sideways glances at his face too. It was quite striking, now that I got a better look. He had high cheekbones, strong Indian features, and eyes that burned with a fierce bird-of-prey intensity that reminded me of Emilito’s; it gave the man an awesome, yet strangely appealing quality.

Watching his face made me dizzy. I heard a loud buzzing in my ear and felt a pressure at my solar plexus. The room began to sway and I felt as if I was about to keel over.

“Lean on me,” the man said as he pressed my back to steady me.

“When is the baby due?” the woman in front of me asked, turning around.

“What are you talking about?” I stammered.

I realized, then, that they must have thought I was pregnant and that was why I was feeling faint.

“I know how you must feel, dear,” said the woman giving me a sympathetic pat. She looked like Clara, only shorter, stockier, and darker complected. “When I was carrying Heime,” she continued, “I used to feel faint all the time.”

“I’m fine,” I said. “I just haven't eaten.”

“I saw you in the street with that young man,” she continued as if she hadn’t heard me. “Is he your husband, or did you cross the border to get married?”

“I did not come to Mexico to get married,” I yelled, “and I'm not pregnant!”

Everyone in the room turned to look at who was shouting, A young man leaning against the wall smiled and shook his head as if he knew better.

“Perhaps you came for an abortion,” the old man said with a snicker. “Shame on you.” He grinned making his eyes look wild.

I was so embarrassed that I had a hard time taking in enough air. I stared at the old man's face. His eyes were shining as if illuminated by two tiny flames. They were black, glossy, like an animal’s except for two tiny dots of amber light that kept getting larger and larger. Yet try as I might, I could not turn my head away. I became mesmerized by his eyes. The room became a white haze except for the man’s face, which had a golden ring around it. Then his face started to expand until his features disappeared altogether. All that was left was a ball of light. I was no longer in the room, but seemed to be moving at infinite speed through a long black tunnel.

“Make room!” I heard someone call. “Give the gringa some air!”

I opened my eyes to see muddy shoes and khaki trousers. I was gazing up at a handful of strangers who were looking down at me. I realized then, I was lying on the floor of the border checkpoint. The thought of being on that dirty floor full of spit and filth, made me immediately raise up. Someone helped me to stand by pulling my arms. Another person handed me water

in a paper cup. Gratefully, I drank it not thinking whether it was drinkable or not.

I remembered my pen. I looked for the old man with the burning eyes, but to my dismay, he was nowhere in sight.

A younger man solicitously handed me half of a cheese sandwich wrapped in cellophane, I took it numbly. All I wanted was to get out of that room into the fresh air. When the official stamped my form, I hurried out the side door stepping into air, light and mariachi music coming from a nearby restaurant.

Across the street I saw Carlos talking to some men sitting on large cement sacks that had been stacked up against the side of a building. When I approached he did not introduce me, but hurriedly broke off the conversation.

“No problems crossing?” he asked.

“It was so stuffy in that room that I keeled over and hit the floor,” I said dryly. “Then someone swiped my gold pen, and everyone accused me of being pregnant, but other than that, it all went fine.”

“Are you serious?” he asked.

“Do I look like I’m joking?”

He looked at me concerned. I imagined my pallor was as gray as the powdered cement scattered overground.

“When was the last time you’ve eaten?”

I had a fleeting image of Clara's well lit kitchen and the wonderful meals we would have there prepared by the elusive caretaker, Emilito.

“A lifetime ago,” I said, knowing that I was indulging in melancholy and self pity. I allowed the waves of dejection to pass until I felt at ease again.

Carlos said something in Spanish to the people he had been talking to and they all looked at me and shook their heads pathetically.

“Carlitos certainly has his hands full,” one of them said in heavily accented English, and

everyone giggled and nodded in agreement, Then I saw a man walk past us at a brisk pace. He seemed to be in a great hurry but he paused and turned for an instant as if he wanted me to see his face.

“That’s him,” I said grabbing Carlos’s sleeve. “He’s the one who took my pen.”

“Who?”

Before I could point the man out, he disappeared in the crowd of Mexicans gathered in the street.

Chapter 3: Santa Ana

It was hot in the Sonoran Desert; over 100 degrees in the shade. In a car without air conditioning, it was like being in an oven turned on low. I had learned to make beef jerky that way, leaving the thin strips of meat on an oven rack to dehydrate over night. The windows of the Chevrolet were rolled down and the hot air fanned my face. I felt like a piece of beef jerky, dry and lifeless.

“Can you be more specific as to what we are going to do on this journey to power?” I asked Carlos pulling down the visor to shield my eyes from the glare of the road.

Carlos glanced at me in spurts as he drove. “It’s difficult to explain,” he said slowing down for a curve. “We’re just going proceed without any specific plan and allow the spirit to guide us. That’s what I do whenever I come to Mexico to see don Juan. I abandon myself to the circumstances as they present themselves.”

“That sounds fine to me, but are we just going to drive aimlessly or are we heading somewhere in particular?”

“We are going to the Yaqui towns of Vicara and Potam with the hope of finding ceremonial masks for the Ethnographic museum. That will be our overt maneuver; but essentially we are searching for power.”

“How will we know when we find it?” I asked wiping the sweat off my forehead with a paper towel.

Carlos laughed at my pained expression. “We will know because something in us will change, or our perception of the world will change. Either way, our journey begins there, in the Yaqui towns.”

“Why there?”

“Because that’s where don Juan and his associates gather to renew themselves. That is where the sorcerers of his group come to restore their power.”

The terrain from Nogales to Hermosillo was desolate; for miles there was nothing to see except giant saguaro cacti and long spiny ocotillo interspersed with toyon trees and small shrubs. Now and then we passed a dense cluster of prickly pear with small birds pecking at it's red fruit. For distraction, I tried to identify as many different types of flora as I could. If I did not recognize a plant, I asked Carlos it's name. He seemed very knowledgeable regarding the vegetation of the area.

“At one time I wanted to study the medicinal properties of plants,” he said, “and don Juan often took me hiking in the desert.”

“Is it possible to survive in the desert?” I asked.

“The Indians use the barrel cactus as a source of water and of course the fruit of the tuna is edible,” he replied, “as well as many of the other shrubs and roots, but you have to know about plants.”

The Pan American highway cut the flat terrain like a black ribbon. I watched the white line stretching ahead of us until it disappeared near the horizon in a shimmering mirage of vaporous water. To ease my distress, I fanned myself with a cologne scented handkerchief. Carlos glanced at the white cloth waving like a flag of truce, and wrinkled his nose.

“It smells like a rose garden,” he said half smiling, but when he sneezed, I could tell the perfume bothered him.

I put the handkerchief back in my purse and popped a Chiclet into my mouth. For distraction, I tested myself on how many variety of flora I could actually identify without his help, I could pick out

the bisnaga, the tuna, the maguey, which is used to make tequilia, the tall yucca that blooms only once every ten years, and, of course, the manzanilla and toyon trees loaded with

scrumptious but inedible red berries.

Around noon we came to a stretch of highway that was being repaired. We slowed down to a crawl and I watched the shirtless road workers manually filling in potholes. A worker with a red kerchief around his head, was shoveling tar from a bucket, the other wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat, was rolling the tar out with an implement that looked like an enormous iron. Further down the road, another worker was brushing water on the freshly tarred area, sweeping it with a wet broom, causing steam to form as the water evaporated in the heat.

The fresh asphalt looked like a thick strip of melted licorice, good enough to eat. I realized then that I was famished. Except for the soda I had in Nogales, some fruit we had bought at a roadside stand, and some crackers I had found in a bag in the back seat, I had not eaten since Gila Bend.

In Nogales, Carlos had offered to feed me, but my fainting spell had left me too upset to eat. It would be three hours before we reached Hermosillo, where Carlos said he knew of an excellent restaurant. Resigned, I searched through my purse for some more chewing gum to moisten my throat.

The overripe mangoes were fermenting in the plastic sack in the back seat. A pungent order drifted forward and invaded my nostrils. The smell was familiar, yet not offensive. I closed my eyes and let the scent of mangoes envelop me.

As my sinuses cleared, I saw a purple light in the area around my forehead. The space opened up into a scene in front of my eyes. I got a glimpse of Emilito making his special brew of mango liqueur. He was wearing a chef's hat and had on an apron over his neatly pressed blue overalls. He was in the kitchen of Clara's house, standing in front of the enormous wood burning stove.

"Because you are a tree dweller," he said, "you are entitled to sample this excellent liqueur I've brewed."

I stared at him dumbfounded.

"I didn't know you drank liquor, Emilito, let alone brewed it yourself. Isn't it bad for your health?"

"It is," he admitted with a devil-may-care gleam in his eye, "but this is a special occasion, so we will try some, you and I."

I began to feel that familiar panic whenever Emilito broke one of his stringent rules. I had never seen Emilito this relaxed before. He was always so careful about what he ate or drank because of his delicate constitution. A dozen questions and as many fears flooded me.

“What is the special occasion?” I asked.

“It’s my birthday,” he said with a childlike squeal.

“But I thought one didn’t celebrate birthdays in the sorcerers’ world. What about the *recapitulation*, what about erasing your personal history, what about facing oncoming time?”

“What about them?” he asked, blinking like a bird.

He took out of the cupboard two exquisite etched liquor glasses. I had never seen them there before, in spite of the keen eye I kept on the placement of objects in and about the house. Nothing had escaped my scrutiny for I had been obsessed with determining who lived in the house and what they were up to.

“I though that losing one’s personal history meant that one didn’t focus on the day one was born, let alone celebrate it,” I said, admiring the glasses. They were crystal with a delicate stem and the faintest geometric pattern etched in the rim.

He carefully set the glasses down on the table. “Where did you ever get that idea?” he asked. “The day you were born is most important.”

“It’s a day I want to forget,” I said.

He smacked his lips. “Well, if it isn’t important to you, then it is to me.”

“I don’t understand.”

“It’s important because that was the day I began repaying my debt,” he explained.

“I still don’t get it. Can you tell me what you mean?”

“The day you woke up in the harness and lowered yourself down from the tree, and the first moment you laid eyes on me at this very kitchen door, that was the day I began repaying my debt. As far as I’m concerned, that was your birthday and, in a way, mine too, and in case you

didn't know it, which you don't because you have a sluggish, lazy mind, that day was exactly one year ago from today. So, Taisha let's drink up and celebrate our freedom."

He handed me the sherry glass filled with a yellow orange thick liquid he had poured out of a clear distillery flask, the kind with the bulbous bottom one sees in a chemists laboratory. He held up his glass and waited for me to do the same.

I had the foresight to know that as soon as our glasses touched something monumental would happen. I hesitated. I didn't want to toast, and yet I was compelled to follow Emilito's gesture. Reluctantly, I held up my glass and said "prost" the way Emilito had, and even tried to smile a bit. Then he insisted we clink glasses.

He sipped his liquor delicately, savoring every bit. I cautiously took a sip of mine. I nearly choked. It tasted like sweet turpentine. Thick, and sticky and warm. Emilito, happy that I was drinking

his concoction, looked at me with such hopeful anticipation that I took another sip.

"Isn't this really something?" he said, waiting for my reply.

"Yes, it is," I said, trying not to grimace.

That was all I could say; the liqueur had burned my throat and I wondered it I would ever talk again. He made me drink every drop and then I passed out.

I remembered having the most vivid dream. There was Clara and Manfred and gorgeous Nelida. I thought we were at a picnic grounds, until I realized it was the back of someone's house. There was an open fire in an oil drum filled with mesquite wood and a grid on top. I smelled pork roasting over mesquite wood. There was a large gathering; among them, a few were young but others were older, and one young man in particular was staring at me. They all seemed so happy and bubbling with enthusiasm and carefree delight, that I forgot my anxiety and was happy too.

I focused my gaze on the young man. He seemed to be the center of the group of people who were listening to him talk. I wanted to go over there, but Nelida stopped me. She placed her hand on my shoulder and said, "stay here, it's not time yet. You'll meet the new *nagual* soon, on the other side. Then your task will be to merge the two sides. Only the profoundest affection will allow you to do that."

I woke up. Something was poking my ribs. I realized it was the car door handle. We must have gone around a sharp curve because I was slumped against the door.

“Damn dogs,” Carlos said. “They’re always crossing the street when a car’s coming.”

“Did we hit it?” I asked concerned.

Carlos reached out an arm to help me straighten up. “No,” he said returning his hand to the steering wheel. “I think we were in luck.”

I looked up just in time to see a mangy dog slithering off the side of the road into a gully.

“Are there people living around here?” I asked surprised to see a domesticated animal. Except for the construction crew, whom I assumed were there just to repair the road, some crows and a field mouse darting across the road, I hadn’t seen a single sign of life for miles.

“Naturally there are people living here,” Carlos replied. “Near the hills there are many rancherias. You can’t see them from the highway, but they’re there. It’s dangerous to wander about here at night. People around here shoot first and ask questions later.”

“Who would want to live out here in the middle of the Sonoran Desert?” I said, hoping the temperamental Chevrolet wouldn’t choose this spot to break down.

“It’s not a question of wanting,” Carlos corrected me. “This entire area was at one time settled by the Yaqui Indians before they were relocated to Central Mexico. Later, they were brought back by the carloads to work in the mines. We are nearing a town called Santa Ana named after the famous general who fought at the Alamo and who later became President of Mexico. There’s even a song about the town.”

“I’ve never heard of it… the song I mean. I’ve heard of the general. Wasn’t he president of Mexico three times?”

“He got his leg shot off and they had a hero’s burial for it,” Carlos said. “And when he fell out of grace they dug up the leg and threw it in the river.”

I took a map of Mexico out of the glove compartment and carefully unfolding it then refolding it to show only the area that concerned us. I wanted to see just how far we were from Hermosillo and that excellent restaurant that Carlos had said was there.

As we turned a curve, a Pemex station and a cluster of buildings came into view. The houses were white with doors painted a brilliant turquoise, the widespread color of the area. Most of the houses in Sonora had their doors painted turquoise or blue. I had always thought it was to represent the blue cloak of the Virgin of Guadalupe, but Carlos said it was because it was an easy color for divers to see, so they wouldn't run into the houses coming around the curves of the narrow streets.

It made sense. By the looks of the dirt alleyways and no sidewalks, it would be easy for a truck or car to swerve around a bend too fast and ram a house.

“This is Santa Ana,” Carlos said slowing down. “If you’re hungry we can stop and get something to eat here.”

I began to salivate with anticipation, but when I saw a dead dog on the roadside, recently hit by a car, my stomach again became queasy. Carlos pulled into the gas station and told me to wait for him in the building next door which was a restaurant while he filled the car with petrol.

When I entered, I found the large airy room was deserted. It had a black and white linoleum floor, metal tables with green speckled Formica tops, framed pictures of the Swiss Alps on the whitewashed walls, and faded ruffled curtains on the casement windows, whose sashes were painted the traditional blue. There was even a broken down jukebox in the corner. The place looked like something out of a fifties movie. Any minute I expected a motorcycle gang to ride through the door, and revving their motors, ride circles around the tables.

I sat down at one of the tables under a ceiling fan that had one of it's armatures missing. A lean middle aged woman and a girl of about ten came out from behind a blue curtain that led to another room. The woman seemed groggy from the heat, or perhaps they had been taking a siesta in the next room and were awakened when I entered. I smiled at the woman, and winked at the girl, who immediately ran and hid behind the curtain.

Confidently, I ordered two Pienafiel mineral waters, “sin gas” in Spanish. The woman smiled and nodded and momentarily returned with one bottle of mineral water with bubbles and a glass of ice, which she set on the table with a bang, I decided it was safer to drink, directly from the bottle and bypass the glass and the ice. I was trying to decipher the hand written menu, when Carlos came in and sat down across from me.

“Forget what’s on the menu,” he said taking it out of my hand. “In rural Mexico, it’s best to order the plate of the day.”

“And what might that be?” I asked, handing him a napkin I pried out of the stainless steel napkin holder.

“I’ll find out.” He beckoned for the woman to come over.

A friendly exchange followed. Carlos attempted to include me in the conversation, but the flow was too fast, so I just nodded dumbly whenever I thought it was appropriate. Then Carlos turned to me and said in English, “she says the stew is fresh. The meat was just killed today.”

“What kind of meat are we talking about?” I asked, remembering the dead dog on the highway.

“It’s hard to say,” he replied with a shrug. “Let’s find out, shall we? I’ll order two specialties of the house.”

Since I had agreed we were on a trip of power and that I would offer as little resistance as possible, I accepted his recommendations with a nod.

“Stew will be fine,” I said, cleaning my spoon with a napkin.

Carlos ordered for me, and the woman, in a faded blue skirt and white blouse, gave me an angry look, apparently offended that I had cleaned the silverware.

Right away the woman returned with two bowls on a tray along with a stack of steaming tortillas and a bowl of green chili peppers. She set them on the table and I was so famished that before she even took the tortillas off the tray, I was already dipped into the stew. I nearly choked. It was the hottest stew I had ever tasted. I literally had to douse the fire in my mouth with mineral water.

The waitress chuckled and pretended not to notice my discomfort, but I suspected that she was getting back at me for insinuating that her silverware wasn’t clean and had spiked my portion of stew with extra chili powder.

“I can’t tell what kind of meat this is,” I said after downing plenty of water. “The chili powder is too overpowering.”

The stew, including the meat, looked uniformly brownish red, although I thought I detected a few beans or perhaps they were bones; I wasn’t sure.

“Do you suppose it’s dog meat?” I asked peering at the stew.

Carlos took a bite. “No, most likely it’s beef,” he said and confidently took another bite. “Hmm. On second thought, perhaps it’s donkey meat.”

Regardless of what it was, he made short shrift of his stew. Apparently he was no stranger to chili peppers either, for he ate a couple of the green ones right from the bowl. I, on the other hand,

only picked at my food and stuffed myself with tortillas.

“I sure hope I’m not eating someone’s pet,” I said by way of commentary.

“Dogs aren’t pets around here,” Carlos informed me. “There isn’t enough food to feed people let alone dogs. A dog’s life in Sonora is truly worth nothing. They have to scrounge all day for food where there isn’t any.”

A fly landed on the tortillas and I quickly shooed it away with a flick of my hand.

“How come Mexico is so poor?” I asked tearing off a bit of the tortilla and leaving the part where the fly had landed. “It seems to me that with all the aid from the United States government, they could grow enough food to feed their population.”

Carlos shook his head. “There’s too much graft and corruption in the higher places,” he said. “Very little of the money ever trickles down to where it’s really needed.”

“Graft and corruption,” I said. “Two of the meanest words in the English language.”

I looked at Carlos, his sparking eyes had taken on a somber air, revealing a more serious side of his nature.

“The Revolution didn’t free the Mexican people,” he continued. “It only enslaved them more. Now everything is in the hands of the government or the big agricultural conglomerates, and the people are still going hungry. What kind, of revolution is that, when ninety percent of the land is still in the hands of a meager ten percent?”

Just then the little girl turned on the jukebox, and the room was tilled with lively music. It was a “ranchera”, the typical music of Sonora. The instruments included the small accordion, a harmonica and some sort of percussion sound all blended together in a lively beat that

reminded me of a German polka. I wondered what the words were and asked Carlos to translate.

“I thought you said you spoke Spanish,” Carlos remarked.

“I do, in an elementary sort of way.”

“How elementary do you mean?”

I realized it would be impossible to keep up a pretense. In a country where only Spanish was spoken, one’s deficiencies would undoubtedly become clear. It was better that I made a clean breast of things.

“First year college level,” I admitted. “I won’t expect you to translate everything. Besides, I understand a great deal.”

Carlos nodded. Apparently he didn't believe my boasting.

The song ended as abruptly as it had begun. The woman came over and stood by the table and chatted with Carlos in a flirtatious manner. I looked on, trying to follow the gist of their conversation. I could tell that she was definitely attracted by Carlos and that at one point she was saying terrible things about her drunken husband, but when I was unable follow their banter of jokes and laughter, I gave up listening and began assessing the woman’s appearance.

I was surprised to see that the woman wasn’t as old as she had first seemed. In fact, under her untidy appearance, she was beautiful; with large almond eyes, high cheekbones and perfectly flawless bronze skin. Her elaborate pendant earrings and long, jet black hair, that was done in a single braid, gave her an exotic look. Incongruously, she wore a large amethyst ring on the index finger of her right hand. There was something about her that looked familiar, yet I couldn’t pinpoint what it was. I wondered who she was, and what caused her to spend her life working in a desert town in Sonora.

I realized I was beginning to feel superior again. The woman’s entire life had been decided for her. She had no alternative but to follow the designs of her fate. Then I began to pity her for being stuck in a small town, having to wait on customers at all hours, and to take care of a husband who drinks excessively, and an obviously undernourished, sickly daughter. The only excitement in her dreary life would be going to mass on Sunday and gossiping with her neighbors about the latest birth or wedding, I thanked my stars that I wasn’t in her shoes.

My thoughts were interrupted when the woman suddenly turned to me and gave me a fierce stare as if she caught the drift of my feelings. A strange uneasiness came upon me as I remembered a previous time I visited Mexico. I was with Clara, also sitting in a restaurant, only it had been full of customers. I recalled how an intrusive stranger sat down at our table uninvited and how Clara dispatched him with a similar intensity that allowed him no alternative but to leave not only our table but the restaurant itself. Now, I felt like doing the same thing, for that woman's stare had cut right through me. On top of that, she had pointed her amethyst clad finger at me and instantly I got a headache.

The woman gave Carlos a smile and me another contemptuous look and left our table, leaving no doubt in my mind that I had completely misjudged her strength.

"That woman is a famous curer," Carlos said in a whisper. "She has patients that come to her from all over Sonora."

"What? You mean she doesn't live here in the back room?" I said stunned. "What is she doing waiting on tables? I thought this was her place."

"Ermilina is filling in for her sister who is visiting relatives in Hermosillo," Carlos explained.

I felt lower than a snake in the sand for getting caught in petty judgment.

"And that girl? I suppose she isn't her daughter."

"No. That's her sister's child, Carmelita. She looks just like her, doesn't she?"

I nodded. "I would have sworn she was her daughter. I suppose she doesn't have a drunken husband either?"

"No. What makes you say that? She isn't married."

I shrugged. "Well, anyone can make a mistake," I said to myself. I wanted to leave before the woman came back. I did not want to face her again. I would hate to be her enemy for I knew enough to tell that that woman had power. If she was a curer she could also cast spells, and I knew about the fear people had of the "evil eye," or "mal ojo," of witches.

I glanced at the door.

"Are you expecting someone?" Carlos asked.

"Who would I be expecting?" I said. At the same time, I realized that I felt a strange excitement at once again being in what I always regarded as "sorcery country," as though I expected Clara to walk in, sit down at our table and begin chatting in her easy way, just as if nothing happened in the many months that elapsed.

From the moment I met Carlos at the University, I wanted to tell him about Clara and Emilito and the sorcerers' house near Navojoa, but a deep barrier always prevented me from talking about them. At one point on our drive, I wanted to tell him of the dream I had with Emilito, but I always felt that telling someone one's dreams invites analysis or comment on one's innermost being so, again, I remained silent.

"Do you think don Juan will be at his house when we get there?" I asked.

I began to vigorously shake my head from side to side to clear it. It was a habit I had picked up from the time I stayed with Clara. Whenever I became mentally bogged down, or emotionally upset, I allowed myself a moment of relaxation by shaking my head. That movement cause an electric current or a quiver of energy to rush up my spine into the back of my head, causing an involuntary shiver, which helped to throw off any tension.

"Perhaps," Carlos said observing me curiously, "but as I've said, sometimes he's difficult to track down."

"Does he hide from you?"

"Not exactly, he just isn't in his house, and no one knows where he's gone or when he will return."

"That can make doing field research difficult," I said taking a bite of one of the chili peppers. "What if he's not there now? Then we came all this way for nothing."

It was fiercely hot but I pretended the pepper didn't bother me. There was something very impressive, I thought, about eating chili peppers straight from the bowl. I remember my brothers eating chilies from a jar, without flinching, in a kind of childhood test of bravery. Since I had copied everything they did, I also followed them in that endeavor. I got blisters in my mouth from the burns to prove I was just as macho as they were. I realized that the *recapitulation* hadn't cured me of my deep rooted competitiveness, for I was doing the same thing now, and I was no longer a child.

“What do you mean coming for nothing?” Carlos said raising an eyebrow at my grimace. “What about delighting in each other's company?”

That sounded so much like something Clara might have said that I had to laugh.

“The trip won't be for nothing,” Carlos assured me. “Remember our plan to collect masks for the Ethnological museum?”

“What kind of masks are you looking for?” I asked.

“Pascola masks. Masks carved for the dances that the Yaqui Indians perform during their celebrations. They represent animals or spirits. The Yaqui Indians believe that by wearing the masks while they dance, they can enter into the spirit world.”

“Do you believe that is possible?” I asked.

Carlos took a sip of mineral water, “Of course, don’t you?” he asked turning the question around.

I wanted to say, “I certainly do,” but a familiar inner warning bell sounded. Now was not the time or place to talk about my own experiences.

“In a way,” I said casually. “They say sorcerers do it all the time, although I don’t really know what sorcery is. Perhaps you can tell me.”

“Sorcery is the ability to perceive more than our society and our personal milieu permits us to perceive,” he said. “Sorcerers say that there is more to all this than meets the eye, but to actually perceive other levels of reality, such as the spirit world, one has to store personal power.”

He became serious and said that to investigate the practices of sorcery and it's ramifications was the reason he had been coming to Mexico on a regular basis.

“If there is something to it, I’m going to find out,” he said with a smile.

The fly was circling the table again. I shooed it away.

“What about Zen Buddhism?” I asked.

He looked at me surprised. “What about it?”

“Did you know that in the old days in China, when Buddhists monks wanted to build a road, they had to pick out all the worms from the dirt and move them to safety before they could proceed with their construction work?”

“And I thought roadwork was slow here in Mexico,” Carlos said with a laugh. “That sounds absolutely tedious. Why would they do that?”

“The Buddhists believe that to kill even the most insignificant life form is wrong. Take this fly for instance. A Zen Buddhist sitting here would not swat it.”

Carlos gave me a curious look as if the heat of the chilis had gotten the better of me. I told him that once my karate teacher, while lecturing to his students about the importance of zen in martial arts, proceeded to squash all the flies that had landed on his desk.

“And with a rolled up martial arts magazine to boot,” I said. “My teacher didn’t see the irony of it all, but to me it was a major revelation. After that, I could no longer respect him.”

“You lost respect for your teacher because he killed a fly?” Carlos asked, “What does killing flies have to do with respect?”

“Don’t you get it? Not because he killed a fly, but because of what the fly represented. It was obvious that my teacher was trying to make us students believe he was a Zen master, but the flies were a dead giveaway.”

Carlos looked at me as it I were a fly, and he wanted to swat me.

“Don’t you see?” I lamented. “Don’t you get it?”

“I sympathize with you,” he said at last. “I too lost respect for my teacher, don Juan. He kept calling me a stupid imbecile and since I knew I wasn’t one, I couldn’t respect him any longer. I thought he was deliberately insulting me and that it was he who was stupid for not appreciating my worth. Luckily, I didn’t stop seeing him, and now I respect him even more because I know he was right. I am an imbecile and so are you.”

I didn’t like it all when he included me in his realization. We weren’t yet on such familiar terms that he could insult me with impunity. In fact, when I thought about it, I realized that it was important to me that Carlos respect me. I was deliberately trying to make a good impression

on him, to the point of eating green chili peppers. To my dismay, the basic premises that governed my behavior had not changed in spite of the *recapitulation*.

Clara had warned me that it was not enough to merely recapitulate one's life; one must also act upon the understanding that a thorough examination of one's life brings. It's not the case that one is suddenly different, but that by being aware of one's habits, one has a moment's pause to act differently if one so chooses. What the *recapitulation* does is that, by bringing awareness to the foreground, it gives one a chance to be different. Whether or not one takes that choice, depends on one's energy at that particular moment. More often than not, I saw that in spite of my understanding of my own behavioral dynamics, my initial reaction was still the same as always.

To impress my companion, I said, "do you know a song called, 'Ich Liebe Caborca?'"

Without waiting for his reply, I began to sing a few bars of a song Clara had taught me about a town in the Gran Desierto settled by Germans. Carlos was not impressed. In fact, my singing seemed to embarrass him more than my trying to speak Spanish. He told me to pipe down. Instead of complying, I obstinately began to sing louder. I didn't know what had gotten into me, for I never sang in front of anyone. Carlos' presence seemed to be doing strange things to me.

When I had finished the whole song, I began to laugh nervously. I knew the heat of the chili peppers had begun to singe my brain, for when I turned my head, I thought I saw Emilito's bird-like face peek out from behind the blue curtain that led to the other room. For a moment he shook his finger at me, warning me not to indulge. It happened so fast that I knew it was an illusion, a product of wishful thinking, like the mirage of water on a desert road. My rational mind explained it away saying that it must have been that woman curer or the little girl that had poked her head out from behind the curtain.

Nevertheless, I took Emilito's phantom warning to heart. I used all my effort to gain control over myself.

"What are you looking at?" Carlos asked.

"I just thought I saw someone."

"But there's no one in the room," he said, concerned.

"I mean someone I knew in the past."

I looked straight at him. A bubble burst and I knew without a doubt that Carlos was the person Emilito had said the *spirit* would put me in contact with. Only, there was no way I could tell him that without him thinking I was crazy, and that was the last thing I wanted anyone to think about me, especially Carlos, He seemed too sober, and I felt that only a stable, reasonable person would pass his scrutiny.

“Do you know many people in Mexico?” I asked trying to sound casual.

He mentioned the names of several people, but Clara and Emilito were not among them.

The woman came back and Carlos gave her some bills to pay for the meal. They chatted while I watched the flies fighting over the crumbs on the table. Then the woman’s eyes held mine for a moment, and in that instant I knew we had met before. She was one of the women in the vision I had in Emilito’s house, I stared at her terrified, but she did not smile to put me at ease as I would have liked. Rather, to my utter dismay, she regarded me with complete contempt.

As we got up to leave, she followed us and whispered harshly in my ear. “Stop indulging, young lady,” she said in English, “or you’ll be in deep trouble.”

I reacted with anger and didn’t want to believe her, but some part of me knew she was right.

Chapter 4: Hermosillo

It was late afternoon by the time we arrived in Hermosillo. We stopped at the main intersection to allow a group of school children wearing blue blazers and knee pants to cross the street. They were accompanied by patrolmen carrying a yellow and white stop sign held up high. When the elderly man lowered the sign, the cars resumed their erratic movement, honking as they made their way through the intersection. With the windows rolled down, I could hear the bells of bicycles, car engines, and barking dogs.

We passed houses with potted geranium plants decorating their tile steps, and ornate wrought iron fences and gates protecting the entrances. Carpets of burgundy bougainvillea covered parts of the

tile rooftops, wrapping themselves around chimney stacks, or hanging in thick clusters from trellises or balcony railings.

Carlos parked the car near the plaza made of a circular park with benches an a gazebo in the center.

“Let’s stretch our legs for a moment,” he said. “I want to stop at a bakery I know and buy some bread and also some fruit before heading on to Guaymas.”

I was relieved to be able to get out of the car and walk before continuing our journey. The chili peppers I had eaten in Santa Ana had upset my stomach and I needed to go to the restroom badly.

“Now don’t go following me in with your notebook,” I said seriously.

Carlos laughed. “It was my friend, Larry, who did the study; I only assisted him on a few occasions.”

Along our drive, Carlos had entertained me with a story of how a friend of his at the University was interested in studying toilet behavior, cross culturally. To this effect, Larry kept a notebook on people’s activities in restrooms. He had accurate records on who went into the public facilities; how long they spent at the urinals or in the cubicles; whether they wrote graffiti on the walls; how much toilet paper was consumed during each occurrence; whether they flushed, and if so how many times; and when possible, information on whether they wiped themselves from the front to the back, or the back to front, and so on.

His friend had complied quite a bit of data, complete with drawings, on the subject of restroom activity, and had submitted his proposal to the National Institute for Mental Health for a research grant. Unfortunately, the cross cultural study on toilet behavior was not approved due to cutbacks in government funding.

“I wouldn’t mind living in this town,” I said to Carlos after I came out of the restroom and we were walking toward a small park. “Everything is so lush and clean.”

“Back there in Santa Ana, I got the impression that you didn’t like Mexico,” Carlos said while stopping to tie his shoe.

“That’s because I thought I was eating dog meat. This is a beautiful place. Where do the people work?”

“In the fields, or in the mines in the hills, or in construction,” Carlos said.

While driving into town, I had seen plenty of evidence of construction work. Everywhere people were building or refurbishing buildings. It was obvious that there was no shortage of masons, carpenters and plasterers here. Near the park, workers were digging a huge pit perhaps to lay new pipes or to repair an old sewage system.

“I used to work in construction,” I said with a touch of pride.

Carlos looked at me in surprise.

“You don't seem like the redneck type!” he said laughing.

“I worked for one, though, as an apprentice, although I knew a lot more about carpentry than he apparently did. Lemont was working on a remodeling project and hired me to be his assistant, provided that I didn’t complain about his radio that he kept on full blast on the country music station, and his foul language, a habit he had picked up in Vietnam.”

“What type of things did you build?”

“Our first project was a redwood deck, using no nails whatsoever, only nuts and bolts. Quite a challenge. You see, he was a Buddhist from a commune in Oregon and he was convinced that to use nails would desecrate the wood. I really needed the money, so I tolerated his eccentricities, the loud radio, his beer guzzling, his profanity, and his body odor. Whenever I wanted to quit, he kept telling me that I was working with a master carpenter who had no peers in the construction world, and that I should be paying him for his guidance.”

“Sounds like quite a character,” Carlos said.

“He was. After weeks he still didn’t trust me to use his power tools which he dusted and oiled every night. I realized it was a situation of observing, hauling lumber, and sweeping up sawdust.”

“That doesn’t sound too exciting.”

“It wasn’t. Lemont had promised me hands-on experience but the only actual hands-on experience I ever received throughout the entire project were his prods and pinches to various parts of my anatomy. I was so desperate, I developed a severe allergy to sawdust and began having fits of sneezing. I was going to hang in there for the rest of the summer, but the situation went from bad to worse.”

“What happened?” Carlos asked, concerned.

“He kept insisting I come to his house to see the new kitchen cabinets he had installed, and share a joint of marijuana while listening to some Willie Nelson tapes. Well, I knew what that meant and realized the situation had become hopeless. I quit and with the money I had saved, I entered the University, where things weren’t all that much better where men were concerned, if you know what I mean.”

Carlos didn’t reply one way or the other.

“Lets look into some of the shops," Carlos suggested stepping aside to avoid a hole in the ground. “Do you need to buy any gifts for friends or relatives?”

“I don’t have any.”

“Friends or relatives?” Carlos inquired.

"Neither.”

He looked at me and shook his head. He sang the line of a Mexican song. “No tengo ni madre ni padre, ni un perro que ladre. I have no mother or father, not even a dog that barks.”

“That about sums up my situation,” I said.

“I don’t have any parents either,” Carlos said. “And I’ve learned that to have friends is too restricting. You always end up trying to please them or to fulfill their expectations. They pin you down.

You’re lucky to be an orphan.”

I wasn’t an orphan, but I did not bother to correct Carlos’ false impression. I realized that I wanted him to think I had no one in the world. It made me appear independent and mysterious. Besides, I had never felt I was a part of my family anyway. As a child I had always imagined that I was a changeling, A nurse must have gotten me mixed up in the hospital with the hundreds of other babies of the post war baby boom. At least, that was what I used to tell myself.

We entered one of the shops that lined the arcade around the plaza. It had the typical ceramic

and leather goods you would find in any shop in Mexico, but in one corner, half hidden by a postcard rack, I found a thick wool poncho with braided fringe. I wanted to buy it but Carlos insisted on paying for it himself. He said that it was a good idea to get it because even though the days were hot, the nights in Sonora were cool.

After some casual browsing, we headed for the bakery that Carlos affirmed was the best in Sonora.

“You mean you’ve sampled bread from all of them?” I teased.

“Practically,” he said, but from his lean, muscular physique, it was hard to believe that he had over-indulged in baked goods.

On our way to the bakery, we had to detour around another deep pit in road that sprang in front of us so suddenly that I nearly fell in and would have had Carlos not grabbed me by the arm and pulled me aside.

“We almost lost you, there,” he laughed. “This isn’t Los Angeles where there are sidewalks and where the cars will stop for dazed pedestrians. Around here you have to watch were you’re going.”

I flushed with embarrassment as I realized that with my martial arts and sorcery training, I was still a walking zombie. I seemed to operate on the assumption that whoever I was with knew where they were going, and therefore I didn't have to pay attention. It was also true while driving. I trusted my companions implicitly and never knew how I got wherever I ended up. This was particularity true when that companion was male. Unwittingly, it was a subtle way of relinquishing control to the opposite sex. I knew it was a dangerous way of proceeding. I remembered Clara’s warning that in the sorcerers world, everything was important and that I always had to be attentive to details and assume responsibility for my actions.

I kept my eyes downcast and avoided the pits and ruts in the road. I noticed that Carlos was exceedingly fleet-footed. His exquisite natural balance and prowess gave him an easy stride. For a while, I tried to imitate his style of walking. Whereas I moved from the hips with little flexibility in my knees and ankles, Carlos flexed his knees and ankles and rolled off the balls of his feet achieving a smooth feline sprint. Copying his stride, I deliberately flexed my knees and shifted my weight more toward the front of my feet, rather than landing heavy on my heels the way I normally walked. After a while, my calves began to ache. I felt I was using them for the first time in months.

The last time I pushed them to the limit was when I was walking with Clara in the hills near her house. I could never keep up with her pace, but walking with her had rid me, at least temporarily, of the "doctor's shuffle" as Clara had called my way of walking. Doctors, she had insisted, had a distinctive shuffle, moving from the hips, as they sauntered from their consultation rooms to the examination room, or down the corridors of hospitals, which Clara claimed was the most they ever walk in their lives.

"They all have bad knees," she said expounding on her generalization. It was not something I was prepared to dispute, for I had to agree that the few doctors I had come into contact with, including my own family physician, fell into her category of shuffling as they walked.

I was aware that having been away from Clara's influence, I had again lapsed into my old habits, including my lazy hip walking pattern, shuffling along as if my listless legs resented the burden of having to carry my body to a place neither they nor I wanted to go.

"What's the matter with your walk?" Carlos asked, concerned. "Did you injure your ankle back there on the road?"

I realized trying to imitate his sprint made my stride appear awkward and uneven. One of my legs was actually dragging behind the other in an attempt to keep up with my head and shoulders.

"Sit here while I go get the bread," he said, pointing at an iron bench across from the gazebo.

"I'll go with you," I offered.

"No," he said firmly. I had the distinct feeling he didn't want to be seen in my company.

Obediently, I sat on the bench and watched him enter the store marked, "panaderia" across the street. Through the glass window, I could see him talking to a beautiful woman perhaps in her late twenties whom I assumed was a customer. She was elegantly dressed, in a fashionable lime green blouse and beige skirt, not a white uniform one would expect a bakery attendant to be wearing. I could see her attire, because I moved closer to the door and actually peeked through the window.

Then I saw Carlos hugging her in a most affectionate manner as she gave him the bag of bread he came for. Then she turned, looked at me and before I could hide, she winked at me as if she knew me. I rushed back to the bench in the nick of time, and pretended to be tying my shoelaces, but as I peeked up I could see the woman had accompanied him to the door and was

waving goodbye to Carlos and then to me across the road.

A strange anger possessed me. I was fuming. What was going on? How is it that people seem to know me when I don't remember them? It couldn't just be coincidence, that witch-women in the restaurant and now this beauty in the bakery. I felt there was a conspiracy going on and I was somehow at the center of it.

I remembered how Clara and Mr. Abelar tricked me in the past. They followed my movements from way back, and when I thought I met them for the first time, they already knew me intimately. The same thing was happening now, and it all began in the Anthropology department when I suspected that I met Carlos before. I must have met him before because otherwise why would I be having a fit of jealousy now, as if he belonged to me from olden times?

I tried telling myself that the woman was no doubt only a casual acquaintance of his and hugged him only because people south of the border are more demonstrative than in the United States. Yet I couldn't help thinking that the woman wasn't Mexican at all, only very deeply tanned. I wondered who that gorgeous woman was and why Carlos didn't want me to go with him into the bakery, and why she waved at me.

"Let's move to another bench," Carlos said. "It's shadier over there by those trees." But I knew the real reason for moving was that he was hiding something. I was distraught to realize Carlos was a man with many secrets. Not that I didn't have secrets myself, which I wouldn't dream of revealing. Yet I had the unreasonable expectation that others had to be completely candid with me.

We walked to the other side of the plaza and sat down on an identical white wrought iron bench, only this one faced the opposite direction of the bakery which was completely hidden by the foliage of trees.

"Why is that your favorite bakery?" I asked trying to sound casual.

Carlos grinned mischievously, "because they make such delicious bread," he said handing me a round flat loaf sprinkled with pink sugar. "It must be the water or the flour they use. Try it and tell me if it isn't so."

I attacked the bread with a ferocity that surprised me, but I had to admit, it was delicious. The rolls were a world apart from the bread in the United States. The sugar coating sweetened my disposition and I decided not to ask about the bakery or the lovely woman I wasn't supposed to

have seen. She was one of those secrets, I hoped would be revealed in time.

Carlos took out a bottle of mineral water from the sack and from his pocket, a Swiss Army knife which had a bottle opener attached to it along with six or seven other sharp implements. He pried off the cap and handed it to me. I finished the bread, then looked inside the bag to find four more small round loaves, each with a different color sugar coating. I picked out a green one. It tasted like the pink one; the coloring was not a different flavoring but merely food color.

“Why did you decide to become an Anthropologist?” I asked taking a sip of mineral water.

“Because the study of man is one of the most important endeavors one can engage in. Especially studying man’s belief systems, his cognitive structures, his culture as he lives it. I’m particularly interested in a phenomenological approach to the study of man.”

“What do you mean by a phenomenological approach?”

“A phenomenological approach to anthropology or sociology would be to take a person and leave them here in Hermosillo to see how they went about interpreting a foreign culture.”

“Are you planning on leaving me here?” I asked in a moment of panic. “To see how I fare?”

Carlos laughed. “No. I was referring to an experiment I had cooked up with a professor in the sociology department. Not speaking the language or being familiar with the customs, he was going to live here in Hermosillo for a while, and I would be the observer and guardian to make certain that no real harm came to him. The premise was that as he went through his daily tasks of trying to arrange the world in recognizable terms, the taken-for-granted aspects of the world would, by their disruption, reveal themselves. They would make themselves available for investigation.”

“I don’t get it,” I said taking another bite of bread.

“In every simple act he would have to find the natural order of phenomenon that for him, because he lacked membership, would be chaotic. In other words, he would have to create order in his day-to-day existence. This process of creating order, would be the subject matter for our investigation. Since the professor’s interest was the study of norms and how they are constituted in our daily lives, I thought it was a terrific plan, right up his alley.”

“Did you do it?”

“No. We were all set to leave for Mexico, when he backed out at the last minute.”

“Why was that?”

“He kept thinking of all the contingencies. He was afraid of contracting some horrendous disease, or of being shot or robbed. All sorts of prejudices and personal considerations came into the picture and so he never left Los Angeles where he felt he was on familiar, and therefore safe, ground.”

“It would have been a great study,” I said, then I had a frightening thought. “Are you sure I’m not the guinea pig this time?”

Carlos leaned over. “We’re all guinea pigs in the hands of power,” he whispered.

Just then a crow perched on top of the gazebo and started cawing. Carlos gestured to it with a nod. “A reaffirmation,” he said.

“I still don’t see how that ties in with phenomenology?” I said, getting back to the discussion at hand.

“Phenomenology takes the tacit faith we have in the reality of our everyday world and makes this the principle subject for investigation,” Carlos explained.

“Exactly what tacit faith are you referring to?” I asked.

Carlos thought for a moment as if to find the right words.

“For example, our assumption that the world is shared, that it is the same world for all normal individuals. Also, that there is a temporal and spacial continuity to things.”

“Isn’t that true?”

“Not necessarily. Sorcerers like don Juan don’t see the world the same way you or I do. Their training and membership in the sorcerer’s tradition enables them to see the world in entirely different terms. Phenomenology questions the assumption that the world is inter-subjectively shared by members. Or rather makes that sharing the subject matter of it's investigation. It also questions the *a priori* that what we call reality has a natural history, a causal basis which allows us to reasonably expect the world to continue in the future in much the same way it has

in the past."

"Are you saying the world won't continue in the future as it has in the past?"

"We don't know, but the fact that we assume that it does is prime matter for phenomenological investigation. These are presuppositions that cannot be accepted outright, but need to be the focus of investigation."

Carlos talked about his interest in Husserl and Heidegger and the French phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponti.

I told him about a sociology class I had taken taught by a professor in the Sociology department, who had devised a method for studying social interaction using a phenomenological approach. He called his deviant approach to study social interaction, "ethnomethodology."

"That was the professor I was going to take to Mexico," Carlos said. "He taught a course called 'The Study of Deviant Behavior.'"

"That's the one," I agreed. "Small world. I was going to be his disciple. He had a flock of students pending on his every word much as a Zen master has students begging him to enlighten them."

"Did you become enlightened with his method?" Carlos asked, teasing.

I shook my head and took another bread from the bag. "For a while I was really impressed with what he had to say," I admitted. "I even became his research assistant without pay just so I could study his methods. I went to his office on Saturdays to assist him on a project. He was studying the natural flow of conversation and had a theory that the squeaks of guinea pigs were not random but a part of a

complex system of coded communication. He had reels of tape recordings of guinea pig squeaks that he wanted me to decode and analyze according to his theoretical system."

"What happened?" he asked. "Did you discover a consistent pattern?"

"I never stuck around long enough to find out," I said. "One Saturday the professor came into the office where I was transcribing a tape of squeaks, and stood behind me for a while, making me believe he wanted to read over my shoulder, to see it a pattern was emerging. Then I felt

him lean closer and start to blow in my hair. When I moved, he sat down next to me and put a long arm around my shoulder, pulled me to him and tried to kiss me. The old geezer had the gall to say he was certain I was interested in having an affair with him because I had come on Saturday to work when no one in their right mind works on Saturdays, but what cinched it for him was that I had told him I didn't expect to be paid for my work. Well, I only came because I genuinely thought he needed help and because I thought I could learn something from his methods. You see, I was having a romance with knowledge, but it was completely misinterpreted."

"What happened?" Carlos asked expectantly.

"I shoved the heavy tape recording equipment off the table right into his lap, I was sure I crushed his guinea pig. You should have heard the squeals!"

Carlos looked at me curiously as if he didn't know what to think.

"I ran out of the office and that was my last encounter with the professor of deviant behavior and with his deviant methods of sociology."

"Well, there is a lot to be said for the phenomenological method," Carlos continued, "all deviant professors aside."

As he talked, I nervously munched on bread trying not to drop too many crumbs on the ground. For whenever crumbs fell, a host of greedy little black birds with yellow eyes and long tail feathers rushed to gobble them up. Carlos's elucidation seemed to have an immediate truth to it. As far as I could tell, experiencing things directly, without the intervention of idealizations, was what Clara and Mr. Abelar had meant when they said that the *energetic body* or *double* could experience realities directly which our reason could never comprehend.

"Take continuity of perception, for example," Carlos continued. "According to phenomenologists, there is a continuity to perception, but it isn't a given. Perception itself is related only to the present. but this present is always seen in terms of having a past behind it and an open ended future before it."

"I think I need a concrete example here," I said trying to follow his explanation.

Carlos pointed to the flowering Jacaranda tree across the walkway near the gazebo.

"Take that tree over there," he said. "You see that tree only here and now, but in seeing it, you

are already presupposing that it was there yesterday in the same spot, and what's more, that it will continue to be there tomorrow even when we are no longer sitting on this bench observing it."

I had to agree. That tree looked like it had been there quite a while. In fact, the blossoms on the ground, proved it was there before we had sat down on the bench.

"The flowers on the ground," Carlos said noticing my glance, "attest to the fact that they were shed prior to us sitting down here on the bench since we didn't see any of them fall. Your mind tells you that that tree has a history, even though you and I haven't been here long enough to perceive it directly."

"I know that tree has a history," I agreed. "It didn't just materialize in front of our eyes this instant."

"Exactly, but how do you know that? How can you be so certain? That is the prime material for phenomenological investigation. What's more, I know that you know that I am perceiving the same tree you are and that we are having an intersubjective agreement as to what constitutes reality, but can we really be certain that we are seeing the same things? A phenomenological approach would question that intersubjective agreement too, or at least, take such an *a priori* assumption into consideration in any discussion."

My mind was reeling trying to imagine what the phenomenologists were up to. To me they were a kind of urban sorcerers, white magicians playing with mind and perception, much as the Clara and her group of sorcerers in Mexico had done while I was living among them. Only, to the phenomenologists, it seemed more of an intellectual game. They lacked the actual energetic force to make the Jacaranda tree disappear in front of one's eyes upon realizing that it's presence is mere interpretation.

Nelida, Emilito and Mr. Abelar, on the other hand, had the energy to make strange inexplicable things happen by manipulating perception. While I was living in Clara's house, things kept disappearing and then I would find them weeks later in the same places I must have looked a hundred times. What's more, features of her house would shift depending on my vantage point. I could never explain these occurrences and Clara had told me not to even try.

It seemed very existential sitting on a park bench in a Mexican town, discussing the philosophy of Husserl, eating delicious bread, but somehow my mind kept flashing back to different questions. Not philosophical ones of whether or not the tree in the park exists in it's own right or because we are perceiving it via a power called intentionality. Such talk seemed to

me filled with overtones of Thomas Aquinas trying to figure out how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. I had had enough of that kind of talk from the Jesuit priests at the schools I had attended.

I wanted to know more about don Juan, Carlos's informant. Since he was also a sorcerer, perhaps he knew John Michael Abelar or of him. Then the thought struck me that perhaps he was Mr. Abelar; that he and don Juan might be the same person. I wouldn't put anything past the sorcerers. I knew they existed on a different perceptual plane, one I was barred from by my lack of energy and understanding. Perhaps, they were all there in the park with us and I was incapable of seeing them because I did not have the means for interpreting their perceptual reality. Perhaps the sorcerers, unlike the tree in the park, had no taken-for-granted history or future. Perhaps they lacked the temporality and spaciality of things, so, therefore, they didn't exist for us the way "things" in the world existed.

"Only an intentional analysis of the present, of perception in and of itself as making something present," Carlos continued, "will give us an inkling of how we construct the world around us. Husserl called that 'living space,' the 'life world', meaning life as it is lived in the present."

"I think I follow you," I said tentatively wiping the crumbs off my fingers. "But I need another example."

"Take that other tree," Carlos said, this time pointing to a beautiful magnolia dotted with white flowers. "The tree gives itself to us as there, as fully present. Although I only see it from the front, I know that it has a back and sides even though I don't see them. So besides knowing that it has been there yesterday, as well as that it will be there tomorrow, I also know that it has sides and a back and an inside and long roots under the ground even thought I don't immediately see them. That's what Husserl means by 'spaciality' being built into perception. We assume the tree is there in all it's fullness."

"True," I agreed, "It's not just a flat facade. I see a complete tree."

"But that very completeness is an accomplishment, an activity, rather than a given," Carlos explained. "In the tree's presence, in the very fact that we see it as a tree here and now, lies a continuity of what we are still conscious of, what had flowed away and what is no longer intuited at all. The tree has a continuity of past and future, resulting from the memory of the tree we saw yesterday, and the expectations we have that it will be there tomorrow. The tree's continuity is put there via our capacity for intentionality. We know it will be the same tree tomorrow as it is today, and it has spaciality, which allows us to see a front and a back and intuit it's fullness."

I took a sip of mineral water. Talking about phenomenology, made me question perception. I had the certainty that if I *gazed* at that tree long enough, and if only I had enough sorcerer's energy, I could make it disappear, since it really didn't have a past or future, back or bottom other than the one incorporated in our interpretation of it. The tree wasn't there the way I saw it at all. Perception linked with mind, or what Brentano called, intentionality, was playing a gigantic trick on the perceiver.

I felt I wanted to get to the bottom of this charade once and for all. I was tired of being fooled by one particular mode of perceiving that had been forced upon me by virtue of the fact that I had been born into a particular "life world" or "being-in-the-world", as Husserl called it. I wanted more than anything to see the trees the way I had seen them under the guidance of Emilito, when I had climbed them, felt their roots, gazed at their leaves, talked to them, loved them, understood them, but now all that was gone as it the giant eye of that reality had closed and sealed that world from view, leaving me stranded on the wrong side of the door. If only Carlos could help me cross over to the other side!

"To understand sorcery, is to expand one's capacity of perception," Mr. Abelar had once told me. "Sorcerers, through the *recapitulation* and other practices, store enough energy to break the reflexivity of space and time. Their practices are deliberately geared towards disrupting the world as we live it."

Now Carlos was saying the same thing, and I knew there must be an inherent truth to it. "A sorcerer would look at that tree and not consider it's 'thereness' as a given," Carlos continued. "Sorcerers, according to don Juan, try to break the mold of perception into which we were born."

"Do you think it's really possible to do that?" I asked, "I mean break out of the mold of perceiving the world as we know it."

"Of course. According to Husserl, all perceptual acts point toward or intend, some object," Carlos explained. "In other words, all seeing is seeing something, all thinking is thinking something. All perception is perception of something, and perception projects itself toward it's intended object which is not a thing, or a given, but an act of creation, and as an act of creation, it can be recreated, or altered to fit a different mold."

"I get it. You're saying that as long as we see perception as a given, we are stuck, forever imprisoned, but if we realize that it is only phenomenon to be investigated, then different ways, or alternatives to perception open up."

“That’s right,” Carlos said. “And who knows what lies in the realm of possibilities available to man as a sentient being?”

“The sorcerers’ path is to break the boundaries of social perception,” Carlos said. “And I say social perception not human perception, because a sorcerer is able to perceive worlds not open to us as socialized beings, but which are, nevertheless, open as possibilities to sentient beings who have given up their social interpretations of the world as they live it.”

“How did you get interested in studying perception?” I asked Carlos.

He was silent for a moment. It was a silence steeped in thought rather than one born out of having run out of things to say.

After a while he said, “It was my good fortune to meet a man who, in my mind, is the most precise and remarkable person I’ve ever know. He has taken me as his apprentice and is teaching me to break the boundaries of perception. You see, you were right when you said in the office of the Anthropology department, that all this that is before us, could not possibly be all there is to the world.”

He swept his hands in a graceful movement in front of us to include the trees, the cars, the boy on his bicycle and the people strolling around the plaza. “There is a way to break through the barriers set up by language and thought, and perceive phenomena directly. That is what phenomenologists talk about; and that is what sorcerers actually do.”

I looked at Carlos. I knew why Emilito had insisted I attend the university. Not only so our paths would cross, but also so that I would have the capacity to conceptualize and share the new *nagual*’s predilection for the abstract.

Carlos turned to look at me and our eyes fixed for an indescribable instant in which my entire future was summed up and my past rushed to meet the present. I couldn’t put it into words, but in that moment, no one else in the world existed, and just as people had their own shared agreements, we held a moment of agreement, too, a silent intersubjectivity, to which no one else was privy. I let out a sigh of relief that seemed to have been trapped inside me for eons, for I knew beyond a doubt that this was the new *nagual*. Fate had joined our paths, and forevermore we would journey together.

“If you’re game,” Carlos said breaking the silence. “We can blast through the world of perception. Let’s find out if there is anything beyond this that we have always taken for

granted."

He laughed for a moment to break the seriousness, but I knew he meant what he said, and somewhere in the depth of silence I agreed. On that park bench I silently agreed to do whatever it took to accompany him to the ends of the earth and beyond. I leaned my head against his as if to merge forces. He reached up and tousled my hair the way Nelida had, and I knew our fates were sealed forever.

We got up without any spoken words or promises, for none had to be made. We both knew at the deepest level that something had changed in the most subtle way. We were not the same as when we had sat down on the bench. We were joined by an *intent* that did not stem from the social order. It existed prior to our encounter in the office of the Anthropology department, and prior yet, to the vision of another reality. Something else had set up our appointment on this park bench, and made possible this journey of power, but what that force was, we could not fathom. For it originated within and emerged from the inconceivable depths of silence. Yet that same force would catapult us to freedom.

Chapter 5: The Road to Guaymas

We drove in silence. I searched my mind for something to say, but small talk had never been my strong point. Each topic that arose as a possibility for discussion, I immediately discarded as either too trivial or too technical for casual conversation. The stringent gatekeeper, lodged somewhere in the back of my mind, kept censoring every topic before I could bring it up.

"Who was that beautiful woman in the bakery?" I asked out of the blue.

"What woman?" he replied keeping his eyes on the road, "I don't recall anyone in particular."

I didn't know how to broach the subject without sounding jealous and possessive so I let it drop. Yet, I couldn't get that person out of my mind, I was sure she was not Mexican, for although her skin was dark, it was more a tan than a natural pigment, I had not been close enough to see her eyes, but if I had, I know they would have been blue. From her dress, I had the certainty that she was from the United States, and from her manner, I suspected that she and Carlos were more than casual acquaintances.

I laughed at myself as I realized that I was already in competition with a woman I had not even met. In spite of the *recapitulation* I had done under Clara's and Emilito's guidance, I was still

reacting like a woman rather than in the disciplined and detached manner of a sorcerer, Clara had warned me that my behavior with respect to men would a be most difficult pattern to break. For certain attitudes and expectations were inculcated in girls at an early age in order to fulfill their social and biological imperatives.

“Femaleness,” Clara had warned me soon after I had begun my *recapitulation*, “includes being jealous, possessive, and treating one’s man as it he were a helpless dependent child. It involves the mandate that if he strays or digresses, he will have to be forgiven, for that is the lot a woman is expected to bear: she must stand by her man under all conditions.”

“I would never put up with such behavior,” I said adamantly.

“You’ll be horrified at what you uncover upon examining your life,” she said laughing. “You’ll put up with whatever your mother put up with, and you yourself told me that she had to put up with a great deal.”

Remembering Clara's words, made me realize that in spite of my professed change, I was still looking into a mirror in which my idea of how a woman ought to behave governed my feelings and actions.

“How much further to Guaymas?” I asked emerging from my self-reflection.

“About an hour,” Carlos said.

He, too, had been lost in thought, although I was certain it was not about himself; and having answered my question he returned to that inner silence from which I had aroused him. I resented his mental retreat, yet I had no qualms in doing the same thing myself. I realized there existed a lack of fairness in my treatment of others. I expected others to carry the burden of the interaction, to entertain or instruct me, while I remained the passive recipient. It was a mode of behavior I had learned as a child from my mother. She had ingrained in me that a girl should speak only when spoken to, meaning that in polite company, I had to sit quietly and not make myself a nuisance by asking silly questions. I had always wondered why that rule didn’t apply to my brothers, who instead of sitting quietly, were rowdy and climbed over the furniture of the friends we were visiting, as if they had the run of the house. On top of that, everyone had found them to be lively and rambunctious boys.

Once learned, I had kept the rule of quiet passivity, not bothering to revise it as an adult. In recompense, I always kept up a lively inner dialogue, to the point of laughing or snickering at my own silent jokes. During my stay with Clara, she had immediately put a stop to this

autocentric behavior. I received a sound rap on the head from her whenever she saw my lips moving, or detected even so much as a smile on my face that wasn't warranted by external events, but having been away from the sorcerers' influence for many months, the habit of talking to myself had returned.

"Why is it so difficult to change?" I had once asked Clara after a day of *recapitulating* in the cave near her house.

We sat down in the kitchen where she handed me a plate of stew. As we ate, she explained that the power to change depended on ones energy. She then put forth the sorcery thesis that the sexual excitation of one's parents at the moment of conception determined the energetic configuration of the infant.

"What exactly does that mean, Clara?" I asked.

"If there was little or no excitation during the sex act, the child born out of that union will be as dull as a plug nickel," she explained. "On the other hand if both parents were excited, then the child will have the energy and optimism to meet life head on and delight in whatever comes his way."

"What happens if only one of the parents was excited?" I asked.

"You tell me," she replied peering at me. "You ought to know from personal experience."

"The person gets enthusiastic for a while and then she peters out," I admitted. "One is imbalanced and unstable."

Clara nodded. "They know that ultimately they don't have the energy to go through with whatever they start. So they give up half way. They never bring anything to fruition; they are defeated before they even begin."

"What can one do about it?" I asked.

"They can tighten their belts and intend themselves different," she said.

"How do they intend themselves different?"

"A person with little energy has to project herself out of herself. She has to link up with a different dream. She has to dream herself anew."

“To dream oneself anew sounds like a metaphor,” I said sighing. “Is it really possible to change?”

“It certainly is,” Clara said. “But first you have to recapitulate your undisciplined life and puke it out. Then you begin *dreaming* a new being, one with vigor and lots of energy to spare. Little by little, you wake up the *energy body* until your acts and feelings match your new being. Every strong and precise act will reinforce the *dreaming body*, and your dream-being, will give power to your daily acts. In this way, you hoist yourself out of your self on the wings of *intent*.”

Remembering Clara’s words filled me with courage and optimism. I pressed a place along my left side just above the spleen, a point Clara had said was useful for becoming alert and for getting a bit of added energy whenever one felt despondent, listless or drowsy.

I glanced at Carlos. “What is the population of Guaymas?” I asked, again attempting conversation. “I passed through there several years ago. I suppose it’s really grown.”

Carlos gave me a curious look as if he wasn’t sure I was really interested in talking about the population of Guaymas.

“It has grown in the past few years, but I don't know what the population is.”

If it hadn't been getting dark, he might have noticed my lips moving as I began to repeat some power words to myself. As it was, my dismal mood was lost in the descending twilight. The darkness was settling like a gray filter covering the eyes. To the west, the sky became a deep purple with red streaks where the sun had already set. The low hills in the distance were black cutouts pasted against the gray-black sky. From time to time, we passed a few Saguaro cactus, silhouetted against the low hills. Their thick arms were turned upward, outstretched to the black heavens as if they had been frozen in a posture of supplication.

All the saguaro were the same; some were taller than others, some had stubbier armatures, but they were all hoping for the same thing: grace to drop from heaven, in the form of gentle rain, droplets of mist to quench their eternal thirst.

I had forgotten how noisy the night in the city was compared to the utter stillness of the desert. I rested my head against the seat’s headrest and listened to the thumping of the car tires passing over the rough road. From the sounds, I could detect that the left rear tire was low, for the wheels were not evenly balanced and an extra thump arose from that direction. It caught my attention and the rhythmic thud lulled me into a half sleep.

I smiled at the thought that if Carlos had wanted to hold a conversation now, I wouldn't be able to come up with a coherent comment. For a hypnotic spell had taken hold of me, and I was feeling heavy, drowsy, so that I could barely keep my eyes open.

The road ahead was straight, illuminated by the bright car headlights. It formed a long, gray tunnel, that pulled my gaze into it, guided by the white center dividing line that peaked in the distance. It took too much effort to pull my eyes away from the road, so I just kept staring at the white line sucking me into a long, deep tunnel, making me drowsier and drowsier. With great effort I shifted my eyes to the side of the road. To my amazement, the landscape had changed. The desert was gone! Gone were the Saguaro cacti, the dusty shrubs, and the occasional tumbleweed that I had seen rolling along the roadside.

Instead, we were driving through a forest and I was seeing giant pine trees on either side of the road. The trees were as tall as the sky, which had disappeared in a mass of dark, piney branches.

Since I wasn't asleep, I knew it was a mirage, but not one that was frightening; it rather was astounding. I let my senses explore the trees which were becoming more and more delineated as we moved through them. Some of the trees were giant redwood with furry bark, long straight trunks and bushy tops. They were so close together that there was no way to see beyond them, to see what was holding them up. Mirage or not, in the darkness, they seemed to be as real as the grove of trees I had seen while driving in Northern California.

All of a sudden the road was curving as if we were in the mountains. Not being familiar with the landscape around Guaymas, I thought perhaps we were climbing into hilly terrain. I allowed myself to go with the scenery and didn't bother to evaluate it with my rational knowledge of the Sonoran Desert and of redwood forests. Watching the trees pass, became for me, a form of entertainment; I found myself looking out for bear, or hoping to spot a deer, but I didn't.

I was so intrigued with the vision, that I could not tell how much time had passed. Carlos was driving slower than usual, as if he too were afraid a deer might dart across the road. I made no mention of the forest of trees that surrounded us, for I was certain Carlos would think me crazy, and the scenery would disappear. Besides, I no longer had the ability to speak. I could barely think let alone voice my thoughts. Then I stopped thinking altogether and sunk into a heavy silence, watching the trees, waiting for a phantom animal to move among them, and finally, just watching.

John Michael Abelar had once told me that men were not the only creatures who could attain a state of heightened awareness.

“Dogs, deer, crows, any animal can have a direct line to intent,” he had said. “We call them magical creatures. Sorcerers seek them and use them as aids or helpers.”

I must have fallen asleep because at one point I was no longer sitting in the front seat of Carlos’s car, but on some sort of hard wooden bench. My head was tilted back resting on a thick post, and instead of looking up at the inside of the car, I was looking up at some giant trees in front of Clara’s house. I was practicing a *gazing* exercise that Emilito had taught me, and I was sitting on that special bench he had constructed according to ancient sorcerers' specifications.

This particular *gazing* bench was designed specifically for *gazing* at trees. The three posts that supported the back of the bench were about six inches square and six inches taller than the top horizontal plank that served as the back of the bench. The tops of the posts were cut at a slant so that when sitting on the bench, one could lean the head back against one of the three thick protruding vertical posts. They were cut at a perfect angle so that when the head was tilted back, it allowed one to *gaze* upward without having to strain the neck or hold up the head. One could then be totally relaxed during the *gazing* practice, whether one was *gazing* at trees, at clouds, or at the moon or stars at night.

This particular bench was set in front of a grove of trees, three of which stood out from the rest. The bench allowed three persons to *gaze* simultaneously, and, if they wished, go into states of *dreaming* together, Emilito was sitting beside me on the bench with his head resting on the post at the other end. He was also *gazing* upward at one of the three trees that were on a slight hill some distance away. Emilito was *gazing* at the left one, the one that corresponded to his position on the bench, while I was *gazing* at the one on the right, directly in line with my point of vision.

The trees were outlined against the purple-blue sky. I was totally relaxed looking at the tree in front of me. It was voluminous, green with swirls of lighter green foliage that seemed to be alive and moved even when there was no wind. In between the thick swirling foliage, there were dark empty spaces where I could see the articulation of the branches.

“Look carefully at every feature of your tree,” Emilito said softly. “Without moving your head off the *gazing* post, listen to my instructions, then do what I say.”

I relaxed and waited for his whispered directives. He told me to begin at the trunk of the tree

and sweep my eyes upward, first incorporating the lower branches, and then moving upward by sweeping the tufts of leaves with my gaze.

I did as he said, relaxing completely, letting the energy from my eyes sweep the tree trunk and gradually ascend.

“Leave your head where it is, just move your *gaze* in the direction of the tree’s growth,” he said. “If your *gaze* gets lost, stuck or distracted, begin again at the bottom.”

I repeated the sweeping procedure perhaps twenty times, always beginning at the bottom, then sweeping my eyes upward along every part of the tree; it's trunk, the side where the tree met the sky, moving toward the thick bushy parts in the center, and gently along the visible brown branches and out to the foliage again. I continued this movement until I had covered the entire surface of the tree, then I began again.

After giving me my initial instructions, Emilito was silent and I sensed he was *gazing* at the tree on the far left that corresponded with his position on the bench. I was curious about the other trees so I turned my head slightly shifting my *gaze*. Instantly, I felt a poke in my left side. He had poked me with a stick that was lying on the bench between us, that I hadn't noticed it before.

“Stay in your own tree,” Emilito snapped. “Curiosity killed the squirrel.”

I wanted to tell him it was the cat, but I didn’t dare correct him.

“These trees are not the same,” Emilito explained. “Each one must be *gazed* at from it's proper place on the bench.”

“How are they different?” I asked not daring to move my eyes off the tree in front of me.

“They are different in the same way people are different,” he replied. “They have their own mood and temperament, their own energy. You know enough about trees from climbing and living in them to realize they are not the same.”

That was true. Trees were as different in temperament as people. Each tree I climbed was a unique being with a history often longer than the lifespan of man. From climbing them, I had learned to sense the tree’s subtle moods, their changes, their needs and even their outpouring of affection. Trees were solitary beings, yet underneath the ground horrendous things were taking place. The roots were intertwined in a mass of growth competing for every inch of space

and moisture. I learned that human beings were nothing in their aggressiveness and competitiveness when compared to trees. Their roots twisted and pushed and strangled each other in an endeavor to survive, going through the most intricate contortions to stake their claim to life.

From above the ground, trees seemed more stable. I realized that it was precisely because trees were so aware and stable that a great part of my sorcerer's training had taken place strapped in a harness, suspended from a tree or while living in a tree house.

“That’s right, Taisha,” Emilito said picking up my thoughts. “That’s why you became a tree dweller. The instability of your *double* demanded it. You were learning how to *stalk* with the *double*. You had to stay in the trees until your *assemblage point* stabilized in it's new position.”

I remembered I was not allowed to come down from the trees except to go to the bathroom. The rest of the time I stayed up there *recapitulating* or climbing from branch to branch with my tree climbing gear. Whenever I wanted something to eat I would have to shout for Emilito to bring me my food. At first, I was reluctant to shout, for I had been taught that ladies never raised their voices, but I knew from past experience that, shouting was the only way Emilito would respond. I would squat and let out a shriek so loud that all the birds around me would fly off in fright, but gradually, the birds got used to my shouting and would just peer at me with one black eye as if I were a strange bird making even stranger noises. Then Emilito would appear at the foot of the tree with a basket of food that he would hoist up to the platform where I was sitting.

“I too was once a tree dweller,” Emilito said again reading my thoughts. “We were both a bit batty, touched in the head.”

Just to prove his point, he gave me another unexpected poke in the ribs.

“And this little branch,” he added giggling, “is to make sure inexperienced *gazers* don’t fly off into the tree or fall asleep on the bench. If I sense you flying or falling asleep, I’ll poke you like this.”

He chuckled and gave me another poke.

“I’m not falling asleep,” I said annoyed. Although, at one point in my *gazing,* I had the feeling I had been sucked into the tree as if I were sitting on one of it's branches.

Emilito let out a howl. “Are you sure you’re not asleep?” he said. “Maybe you already tell asleep while I wasn’t watching.”

“I did not,” I said and to prove it I pinched myself on the spot below the left floating rib, the place where he had been poking me. Then I brought my eyes back to the tree corresponding to my end of the bench and repeated the *gazing* sweeping motion in a most detailed and deliberate manner. I repeated it again and again, feeling with my eyes, as Emilito had recommended, the patches, the differences in shading and texture, and the openings where the branches poked through.

“Now, move your *gaze* around the periphery of the tree where it meets the sky,” Emilito instructed. “Follow the outline of tree and sky with your *gaze* as if you were painting the tree with a long handled brush.”

I did what he suggested and all of a sudden the color of the tree changed from a dark green to a bright chartreuse as it a gigantic spot light had been turned on. The sky, instead of being a purple black, turned into a bright blue green. It happened so suddenly that I closed my eyes and pressed backwards against the bench. Luckily, the sturdy head post kept me from falling to the ground. When I opened my eyes again, the change of color was still in effect.

“Let the energy from the tree flood your eyes,” Emilito said. “Merge with the tree the way I showed you.”

When I did, the tree changed colors again. Now the sky was a bright gold, and the tree became a mass of dazzling peach colored light. Each leaf was a bit of light superimposed on a simmering limb, forming a matrix of light. Layers and layers of light burst forth from the tree until I was looking at a pulsating shimmering spread of energy that merged with the energy of the golden sky around it.

It was a sight to behold. I realized then why different parts of the tree were different colors; they had different intensities of energy emanating from them. These patches corresponded with moods or feelings that the tree gave off, and there were dark spots, too. Places from which no light emanated. I knew that these were the shadow entities that inhabited a realm very close to our own, and sometimes crossed over. I was surprised to see some of these shadow beings climbing the tree branches the way I used to climb them.

The light of the tree shimmered and moved as if wet, like raindrops illuminated by a car headlight. Nothing about the tree was static; it was absolutely fluid, impermanent. In one moment, my taken-for-granted impression of trees, that they were stable, sedentary and

permanently rooted was blasted away. Upon seeing the shimmering pulsating mass of yellow and white surrounded by the palest pink: halo, I knew trees were in constant flux.

“Are you *seeing* it?” Emilito asked.

“Yes, yes,” I gasped. “Whoa! I had no idea trees looked like that.”

“Don’t get too excited or you'll shift your *gaze* back to normal vision,” he warned. “Stay relaxed and calm. Don’t wake up.”

“There you go again, Emilito. Forget your prodding stick. I'm really not asleep, but it certainly seems as it I were dreaming. Am I dreaming, Emilito?” I asked not daring to move my eyes away.

“Yes and no,” he said. “*Gaze* now; ask questions later.”

I remained still and silent for I did not want the scene to dissipate. I feasted my eyes on the light for as long as I could. Then as suddenly as it had appeared, the light vanished and I was again *gazing* at the enormous tree in front of me. It was as if a radiant apparition had vanished leaving behind only it's familiar outward form and the memory of something stupendous now gone. It was a shimmering ghost fading away, and the tree that had been so magnificent at the outset of my *gazing*, was now a disappointment compared to *seeing* it's true essence.

“You can open your eyes now,” Emilito said poking me in the ribs with his stick. “The show’s over,”

“What a show!” I said. “I had no idea…”

Emilito raised a hand to silence me.

“Of course you had an idea,” he said. “We all know how to *see* the essence of things. We did it as infants; and you did some *gazing* while living in the trees. Have you forgotten how to shift your eyes and project your feeling? Are you looking and feeling only yourself and ignoring everything else?”

“Stop, Emilito. Stop,” I said remorseful for all the time I had wasted looking at myself, when I could have been *seeing* trees and other things.

“Shallow is form, look behind,” Emilito said feigning an oriental accent.

I had to laugh. I wondered where he had learned that Buddhist adage. He must have gotten it from Clara who always had been spouting oriental aphorisms.

“You sound like a Buddhist monk,” I said. “Don’t tell me you were in China, too, along with Clara?”

Emilito smiled and nodded, “I'm the caretaker of this house,” he said. “But I do get around. Someday I’ll tell you my story. Or, better yet, allow you to *see* for yourself.”

Emilito looked at me as if he had a stupendous secret to reveal. It gave me the shivers. He told me to examine the bench to see how it was put together so I could construct one myself in case I ever needed to. It was fastened with pegs pushed through drilled holes. I was impressed by it's sturdy yet elegant construction.

“This bench is a real help for *gazing*,” I said. “A great design too.”

“Made by yours truly,” he said with a bow.

“Did you learn this in China?” I asked.

“No. The idea was handed down to the *nagual's* lineage from the ancient sorcerers. The sorcerers of our line have all sorts of devices and gadgets to aid them in their *dreaming* and *seeing* and *stalking*. The leather harness in which you were suspend is one such aid, this *gazing* bench is another. Of course, they are only devices that make *seeing* and *dreaming* easier, but *seeing* and *dreaming* and *stalking* can be done without depending on any device. All one needs is an impeccable spirit, and of course, energy stored through the *recapitulation*, refraining from indulging, and inner silence, so that the *energetic body* or *double* can awake. Then one can *stalk* with it and do all kinds of things.”

“What do you mean by *stalking* with the *double*?” I asked.

“What a silly question,” he said blinking at me. “That's what you were doing all those months in the trees. You were solidifying your *energy body* and *stalking* the trees and yourself with it, as well as the companions that lived up there with you.”

“What do you mean companions?” I inquired. “Other than the squirrels and birds, I was up there by myself, and you know it.”

Emilito smacked his lips. “Like hell you were. What about your shadow companions?”

I remembered seeing the shadow beings in the trees as I was gazing at the tree and did recall seeing plenty of shadows while I was living in the tree house. In fact, many of the smaller ones I had thought were birds hopping among the branches turned out to be small fluttering shadows. I told Emilito this fact.

“As your *energy body* becomes clearer, you’ll remember your friends more clearly. Now we are using the *double* to gaze at trees. You could even move from this bench into the trees themselves,” Emilito continued. “You remember doing the tree merging while standing under a tree. Someday when you have stored enough energy, you can try *gazing* from this bench again and we’ll see if you can be catapulted into the tree. Maybe even some of the shadow beings will help you.”

“I’d rather just climb the tree with my tree climbing gear,” I said. Somehow the idea of being sucked up into the tree tops, or anywhere else for that matter, by a shadowy confederate, was too unsettling. The memory of crossing the threshold into the left side of the hall of Clara's house where the other members of the *nagual's* party had been waiting, was still too vivid. Some force had catapulted me with such a devastating push, that I flew right out of the house and beyond the recognizable world itself. Then I woke up hanging from a tree, with no recollection of what had happened, how I had gotten there, or how long I had been suspended.

“Well, then, if you’re scared of jumping into the treetops with your *double*, or of letting the shadow beings give you a push, how about making the trees move away from their spot?”

“What are you saying, Emilito? That trees can move from their spot?”

“That’s right. Trees aren’t what they seem at all. You *saw* that yourself. Once we *see* them as masses of light, we realize that they can merge with other *energetic beings*, just as we can move and merge with trees.”

“Are you saying that trees can actually change their position?”

“Some trees can, but not all,” Emilito clarified. “Just as some people or animals can get to their *double*, but not everyone has the energy to become aware of their other side and begin to *stalk* with it.

“You mean a tree can pop up somewhere else? That’s hard to believe, Emilito, mighty hard.”

“Not when you *see* trees as energy that’s constantly changing,” he insisted. “Energy never stays the same. It moves depending on it's surroundings.” His eyes became fierce as a bird of prey. “And,” he

added, “depending on who’s commanding it.”

I had to waver in my certainty. The memory of *seeing* that tree glowing with a flowing light, had given me the impression that it was in a state of flux. Perhaps, Emilito was right after all; trees could move away from their spot.

“The ancient sorcerers, using their powers of *seeing*, would make an all out search for such trees, which they called ‘power trees,’” Emilito explained. “They would form intense bonds with them. The tree then would become the sorcerer’s ally and even transport them to different places. The sorcerers would aid the tree with their energy, and the tree would help the sorcerer in a symbiotic relationship. Sometimes a sorcerer would even merge with a tree permanently in order to temporarily prolong his own life.”

“It sounds downright gruesome,” I said. “Like some sort of magic carpet sorcerers could sit on to travel.”

“They didn’t travel with them, they just moved with them. There is a difference,” Emilito clarified. “If they wanted to travel, they would change into a bird or a swift footed animal such as the mountain lion, which are much more adept at traveling than are trees.”

“What would they do with trees then?”

“They would hide in them, and move the trees to confuse whoever was pursuing them. In ancient times, sorcerers had fierce enemies who hounded them relentlessly. Sorcerers would hide or merge with the trees so that their enemy would become confused. Or they could cause an entire grove of trees to move together. Imagine seeing an army of trees advancing on you. Their enemies would die of sheer fright.”

“Or trees can exchange positions to see what it’s like to be on another spot.” Emilito continued, “but that takes tons of energy, even for a tree, and even if that happened, a person would not notice the switch unless he was a sorcerer.”

When Emilito said that trees could exchange places, I remembered an incident that happened in Clara’s house. To the rear of the patio were several fruit trees including a large zapote and a loquot. At one time, I had thought the loquot tree was on the right side of the patio, and the

zapote on the left, but one day, after I had been staying with Clara for several months, I could have sworn that the trees had changed places. I discovered that it was the zapote tree that was on the right side of the patio shading the bench Clara and I often sat on. When I mentioned this to Clara, she immediately hushed me up and told me not to speak of the zapote ever again. That wasn't difficult to do because I discarded my speculation as an absurd impossibility.

Now, in the light of what Emilito was saying about trees, I wasn't so certain anymore. Perhaps, those trees had exchanged positions.

I asked Emilito about this. He said that the trees in the *nagual's* house were very special; they had *power* and, therefore, they could do whatever they liked. They could bloom out of season, bear

fruit all year around, or exchange places if they wished.

"That's hard to believe," I said. "And yet..."

"Enough talk. You've used up your *dreaming* attention. It's time to wake up. Rest your head against the *gazing* bench."

"What do you mean it's time to wake up. I'm already awake."

"You asked me before whether you were awake or *dreaming*. Now I can tell you that you are awake and asleep at the same time. You are awake in your *double*, but asleep in your physical body."

He leaned toward me and gently pushed my head backwards against the bench post. I felt a prickling pressure on my forehead and then at the back of my neck and head. I saw Emilito's face so close yet so clearly that I began to suspect that he was right, I was dreaming. The thought of having to leave and go back to the every day world created in me such a sadness that I tears came to my eyes. I didn't want to leave Emilito and the grove of trees. I resisted waking up. I wanted to ask him more about the Loquat and the Zapote, and about gazing, and about how trees are able to move from their spots, and most of all, about his own secret story that he promised to reveal to me.

"Emilito," I called as if I were up in the treehouse waiting for my meal. "Emilito." But the scene in front of me had already shifted and I was no longer outside Clara's house sitting on the gazing bench. Emilito's energy had added stability to the *dreaming* reality, but now that he was gone, I was unable to control the scene. I could no longer see him, yet an intense longing

stayed with me. Then I again felt the pressure on the back of my neck as if Emilito's hand was pushing me against the post, and my head was bursting with a prickly energy that forced my eyes to slowly open.

I first saw the car ceiling, then the dashboard. Then Carlos sitting behind the driver's wheel. The headrest pushing against my neck had made it numb; the prickly sensation traveled down my shoulders and into my back, arms and hands. I was awake but I couldn't move. I felt like my head was made of electrified Styrofoam, light and sizzling at the same time. I remained silent with my eyes open for a while longer, not moving.

"How long have I been sleeping?" I asked trying to straighten up.

"About an hour," Carlos replied.

"How much further to Guaymas?" I asked, then laughed because it was exactly the same question I had asked just before I had fallen asleep. Yet it seemed ages ago.

"It's just round the bend," Carlos said, as a huge hill came into view. "We'll get something to eat, and spend the night there. Tomorrow we'll head east to the Yaqui towns and see what our power brings us."

I could detect the faint glow of the city in the distance. A shiver went through me as a dark shadow fluttered by the car for a moment obscuring it's headlights.

Chapter 6: Guaymas at Night

Carlos parked the car near the wharf so we could look out onto the choppy sea. Eerie dry docks and warehouses, illuminated with white lights were silhouetted against the twilight sky. From somewhere on the ocean, came the deep moans of a tog horn. The sounds drifted back to shore carrying a somber mood. The only sound more lonely than a fog horn was the moaning of air brakes in the night as trucks come to a gradual halt. That sound always conjured up in me the image of vast flatland and a solitary driver without shelter or home.

The air was cool. I wrapped the poncho around me to hold in the warmth. I remembered a crocheted afghan I had as a child, which had disappeared along with my other keepsakes, when Clara's cousin had put the things from my apartment into storage. Whoever had sorted through my things had done a thorough job of wiping out the identity of the person to whom

they belonged. They had deliberately discarded the items that had a personal significance, such as my photo album, the stuffed tiger from childhood, also my favorite suede jacket, and the karate uniform and black belt, which I had always worn for practice. What was packed in the storage boxes, were items such as dishes, pots and pans, towels and clothes I had hardly worn. They could have belonged to anyone, with no sense of personal history, or individuality.

I was in the midst of nostalgically morning my loss, when I saw a white envelope taped to one of the box tops. Inside, was a note from Nelida; it said: “Don't morn your mementos; then is then; now is now.” Clipped to the card were seven crisp one hundred dollar bills. The implication being that I should buy whatever I needed.

For a while, I just stood there with the note and bills in my hand. Then, as I began to clam down and assess the situation, I realized Nelida's masterful *stalker’s* maneuver. She knew that I would have trouble parting with my mementos, so, in one stroke, she had done it for me. The thought that I would never see her again, made all my anger vanish and my attachment to things seem insignificant. Then and there, I promised to do whatever it took to break the hold that possessions had over me. I vowed with all my heart to fight coveting, greed, and self-pity, but as the days grew into months, my resolve weakened, for I was constantly bombarded by memories of the past, and present influences that pulled me towards acquisition and attachment. It seemed I was waging a battle impossible to win.

We drove past the dark wharves that cast massive black shadows on the pavement. I was thinking of Nelida’s superb sense of detachment, when I saw the flashing sign of a Ramada Inn. Carlos veered into it's well lit parking lot.

“We’ll stay here for the night, if that’s all right with you,” he announced. “We’ll continue on to the Yaqui towns in the morning.”

I waited in the car while he registered us. Then we drove around one of the wings of the main two story building, and parked again. The adjacent rooms were on the ground floor and opened onto a long covered corridor that lead to a fenced off swimming pool area.

“Let’s grab a bite to eat,” he suggested. “I know of a good restaurant near the center of town which is only a few blocks from here. We can walk if you like.”

“I’m not at all tired,” I said and meant it.

I set my bag on the bed and looked in the bathroom mirror. I wanted to wash my hair but Carlos had said to meet him in fifteen minutes and I didn’t want to keep him waiting. Besides I

didn't want him to think I was one of these women who took hours priming in front of a mirror. Clara had cured me of that.

Since there were no mirrors in her house, I got used to performing my daily hygiene with maximum efficiency. Clara also weaned me from wearing make up, which she said blocked the natural flow of energy around the face. The day after I arrived at her house, she handed me a box of tissues and told me in no uncertain terms to wipe off my lipstick. I was embarrassed and infuriated for it recalled a scene that had happened before in junior high school when Sister Beatrice came up to me in the hall, handed me a tissue and made me wipe off the lipstick I had dabbed on. Now Clara was having me do the same thing and I felt ridiculous.

"I'm free, white and twenty one," I told her, "And I'm definitely old enough to wear lipstick."

"It has nothing to do with age," Clara said adamantly. "If you want to be a clown and paint your face, be my guest, but for storing energy, the skin, especially around the mouth, eyes, and forehead has to be kept tree from noxious substances. Even face lotion has to be used sparingly."

She went into a lengthy digression of how chemicals, even in the so called organic make-up were absorbed by the skin and ingested, as in the case of lipstick, through contact with the tongue.

"What about mascara?" I said annoyed, "Do you want me to look, like a rabbit with pink eyes?"

Clara threw up her hands in exasperation. "better to resemble a rabbit than a bat from hell!" she said. "That black stuff runs all around the rims of your eyes because you're constantly rubbing them. Why not leave your face natural? There are no men around here for you to attract."

"If I don't put on some rouge, I'll look like death warmed over," I insisted.

"You look like death warmed over if you do put on rouge," Clara said as she slid my makeup kit off the counter into the trash bin. "Stop using these, and the natural glow of your skin will shine through and your color will return. Just think of how much time you'll save not having to worry about how you look. Besides, as I've said, you're not here to bag a man. Which is what putting on make up is all about. Am I right?"

She had a point. The fashion magazines and advertisements lead one to believe that a woman was not fully dressed unless she had make up on. I decided to follow her suggestions, and after

only two weeks, according to Clara, the pallor of my skin, that had been systematically dulled, had regained it's natural sheen.

I turned off the water faucet and put on some natural bee's wax lip gloss, which being colorless and odorless did not, according to my scheme, fall into the category of makeup. Then, wrapped in my poncho, I waited for Carlos outside my door with a few minutes to spare.

We walked to a plaza surrounded by an arcade of shops. The restaurant was on the ground floor of an old hotel. There were outdoor tables along the arcade, but most of people were sitting inside because of the brisk night air, A tall waiter dressed entirely in black except for a white towel around his waist, seated us near a column that held up a mezzanine where musicians were playing a lively tune. I scrutinized the menu, but couldn't decide what to order. When the waiter returned, Carlos ordered fried steak and rice and plenty of tortillas for both of us.

"Don't eat the tomatoes," he warned, when the waiter brought a small tomatoes and onion salad that apparently came with the meal.

"If I eat the tomatoes will I die?" I asked concerned.

I told him about what happened to an anthropology professor I once had. While trekking to the village where he was to conduct his fieldwork in New Guinea, he picked a ripe tomato fresh off the vine and ate it. An hour later his whole body was covered with lumps and he tell into a coma. Four sure-footed Gururumba natives had to carry him down the mountainside in a make shift stretcher, where he was rushed to the local hospital. It turned out that the anthropologist was allergic to the toxins in that particular variety of tomato and he nearly died.

"Nothing as dramatic as that," Carlos replied. "But you'll no doubt get Montezuma's revenge."

"I've heard that can be pretty dramatic in itself," I said moving the salad off to the side.

We finished the steaks. It was delicious meat marinated in a hot sauce with fried onions.

"Aren't you going to eat your rice?" Carlos asked pointing at the untouched pile on may plate.

"I never eat rice."

"Is it against your religion?" he teased.

“No, I just never eat it. Even as a child, my mother, knowing that I wouldn’t eat rice, always made me mashed potatoes instead, I don’t know why I didn’t eat rice, I just didn’t.”

“Perhaps, it was because you were a princess.”

I resented the insinuation of having been spoiled, which to me was the furthest thing from the truth. “She just made me potatoes because she knew I wouldn’t eat the rice. If you really want to know, rice reminded me of a pile of intestinal worms that, when I looked down, seemed to come alive in my plate. I just couldn’t swallow them.”

Carlos peered at me and shook his head. “An interesting case for Dr. Katz,” he said gravely.

“Who’s Dr. Katz?”

“He’s a psychiatrist I once worked for at the Neuropsychiatric Institute, at U.C.L.A. He used to interview patients and I would classify the recorded sessions in terms of a rigorous content analysis.”

“You were at the N.P.I.?” I said surprised. “So was I. Small world.”

“What were you in for?” he asked concerned.

It struck me that he thought I had been at the Neuropsychiatric Institute as an inmate. I felt insulted for his lack, of confidence in my sanity.

“I wasn’t a patient,” I said quickly to set the record straight. “I was there to do research, just like yourself. Only I worked on a project involving autistic children.”

“That sounds interesting,” he said helping himself to some of my rice.

“Actually, it was one of the most boring projects I’ve ever worked on.” I moved my plate over to him so the grains wouldn’t scatter all over the table. “The object of the research was to get the child to talk, or rather to make phonemes. I had to sit in front of the child, who was in a small isolation booth with a window cut into it, so he wouldn’t become distracted. I would hold his face and say, ‘Look at me, look at me. Say mmm. mmmm. mmmm.’ The child would squirm and look away and try to get off his stool, anything but make the sound, mmm. If by chance he did make the sound, mmm, or something remotely similar, the procedure dictated that I pop an M & M candy into his mouth. Then I moved on to another phoneme, repeating the words, ‘Look at me. Look at me. Say ahh. ahh. ahh.’ and so on for

about an hour until I was reduced to a babbling idiot."

"Did you have much success with that approach?" Carlos asked.

"Are you kidding. It was hopeless. I doubt any of the children ever learned to talk, although I didn't stay with the project long enough to find out. I became so frustrated trying to get the child's attention and making ail those weird sounds, that I ended up eating most of the M & M candy myself. I suppose I was rewarding myself for the trouble I had getting the child to sit still. I have to admit that I put on quite a few extra pounds that summer. To me those children were un-trainable."

"I disagree," Carlos said. "I had an autistic girl in my care and after only several weeks, I actually got her to talk. I took her to the circus and the zoo. We had the best time. She talked, but only to me."

"I thought you did content analysis on tape interviews at the N.P.I.," I said.

"I did that after I got fired working with autistic children," Carlos explained. "The head of the project was furious because I treated the girl like a human being. I really liked her; to me, she was a fine human being, not just a subject in a case study."

"He probably envied your success," I said. "I know how it is among researchers. Everyone wants to claim credit for any breakthrough."

Carlos shrugged. "He gave me a job in which I didn't interact with people directly. He had me listen to tapes of psychiatric sessions. I listened to hours and hours of people's complaints about every conceivable subject. Some of the problems were genuine, but most of the time people just wanted attention."

"That's probably true, I said soaking up the gravy with a bit of tortilla. "Who doesn't want attention or affection?"

Carlos peered at me again. "The real question is," he said, "who is willing to give it? I have a friend, who every morning opens his bedroom window and yells, 'Does anyone out there love me?' at the top of his lungs. Of course, he hates his wife and everyone around him, but he wants unconditional love himself."

"You probably think, that I never eat rice because I want attention or perhaps love," I

mumbled self consciously.

“I wouldn’t know,” he said. “You tell me.”

He looked at me in such a way I had to avert my eyes. Love, to me, was a delicate subject I didn't care to discuss.

“By the way, do you eat corn?” Carlos asked.

The way he said it make be think he was trying to assess my psychological profile by means of food products.

“I have nothing against corn. In fact, it’s my favorite vegetable," I said exaggerating my fervor.

“Then let’s have some pie made out of sweetened corn.”

When it arrived I took a bite. Although I had never eaten corn as a dessert, I had to admit, the pie was delicious.

After Carlos paid the waiter, he suggested we take in a movie. I was too excited to sleep, so I agreed, even though I assumed the film would be in Spanish, thereby, difficult for me to understand.

Several blocks from the restaurant was the theater, although it did not look like the movie theaters I was accustomed to seeing in the United States that had a marquis of flashing neon lights. It was an ordinary Spanish style building, with several posters on the front of it and a small window for a box office. I could tell from the posters that the coming attractions included a film with Charles Bronsen and another with Cantinflas.

“You’re in for a real treat,” Carlos said. “They’re showing a kung fu movie. You told me you had studied martial arts.”

I was relieved for in martial art movies one didn’t have to understand the language. The action spoke for itself.

It was dark, when we entered the theater, from the buzz of the people, I sensed the room was packed. When our eyes had become accustomed to the dark, Carlos led us to a back row where we found two empty seats. I was acutely aware of the smells around me. Someone behind me was coughing heavily. He must have been drinking too, for I sensed the distinct odor of alcohol

coming from that direction. Worse yet, there was the smell of stale urine emanating from the back row.

The feature had just begun. It was a Bruce Lee film dubbed in Spanish. His dubbed voice didn't sound at all like Bruce Lee's own voice, which was a bit screechy, especially, when he went into his vocal gyrations during his fighting routines. The dubbed voice was a deep baritone, very gruff, fitting the Mexican image of a kung-fu fighter, but I soon grew accustomed to the voice and the odors, and was captivated by the action.

Bruce Lee was going through his elaborate nunchaku routine. The audience yelled, cheered, jeered and whistled unabashedly as he whipped the nunchaku under his arm with impressive speed. I could tell that the majority of the audience was male, but there were a few women in the group, because their heads were leaning against their companion's shoulder. I surmised they were young couples out on dates.

Weapons were something my purist Japanese instructors would teach only to male students. When I had asked my karate teacher, why I couldn't study weapons just like his male students, he took my into his private office and carefully explained to me the true meaning of karate. The character "Kara," means "empty" he said, whereas "te" means fist or hand. Thus, the essence of karate is empty hand fighting with no weapons. He made it clear that I should dedicate myself to learning the essence of Karate and not worry about learning weapons, which weren't that useful in a woman's hands in the first place.

"The body is a weapon," he had said. "It is a weapon of the highest order. Perfect it and you will be in control of any situation."

"What if I'm walking down a dark alley and I'm attacked by a bunch of thugs?" I asked. "Will I be able to defend myself then?"

"Why would you even think of walking down a dark alley?" he said. "The first rule of a martial artist is to avoid trouble before it begins." He never told me how that was done because I'm sure he didn't know, but when I had asked Mr. Abelar, "How do you avoid trouble before it begins?" he had replied, "your energetic body will tell you where there is trouble. It's possible to *see* with your energetic body what goes on around you. *Recapitulate*, and let the *seer* within your emerge and come to your rescue." He added that sorcerers who train the *energetic body* or *double*, are able to go through walls or fly through the air and do all sorts of things the physical body couldn't do.

Bruce Lee let out one of his stylized yelps as he incapacitated a pack of thugs with a series of

perfectly placed flying kicks. I promised myself, that upon returning to Los Angeles, I would begin a regime of daily martial art practice, and I would resume *recapitulating* and I wasn't going to slough off on the *sorcery passes* Clara had taught me either. I would make time to do them. I wanted more than anything for the *seer* in me to awaken.

I felt a draft on my neck. I thought they must have turned on the air conditioning full blast, although I didn't hear any motors running. I glanced up to see it any fans were going, but all I saw was a uniformly black ceiling painted with white streaks and some air conditioning ducts. Someone really messed up the ceiling with spray paint was my thought. I returned my attention to the movie, but the draft didn't stop.

Finally I leaned over to Carlos. "I don't suppose we could change seats," I whispered. "The air conditioner is blowing right on my neck."

"Guaymas gets pretty windy at night," he said not taking his eyes off the move.

"Windy? What wind?"

I looked up again and experienced a moment of total perceptual dissonance. I suddenly saw we were sitting out in the open and what I had thought was a perfectly smooth surface with specks of paint, was the sky; the paint were clumps of clouds, and the air ducts were shadows of trees. It was as it some force had come and lifted off the roof while I was watching the movie. I felt my stomach sink as when riding a fast moving elevator; simultaneously the top of my head expand upward, in an acute physical distortion. I grabbed onto Carlos' arm for support, for I felt some part of me was shooting straight up and I was ascending out of the theater into the air.

"There's no roof," I whispered. "We're out in the open!"

Carlos turned to me and said, "I thought you knew that when we came in."

"How was I supposed to know that. It was dark when we came in."

I felt disgusted with myself at being caught unawares after I had agreed to be more attentive, and ridiculous for not having noticed such an obvious fact as a missing ceiling. I knew in spite of my *recapitulation*, I still took everything for granted. Unless something actually hit me on the head, I didn't notice it. I blamed my total stupor on my lazy middle class upbringing. Having gone to Catholic schools, I was trained to obey authority without question. My entire life had been based on accepting dogma, on having faith in the world around me without ever

thinking, exploring or questioning my surroundings.

Clara had warned me of this condition shortly after she had put me to recapitulate. She had said I had a sluggish energetic body, in fact, one that was totally asleep.

“Your values were handed to you by your parents, the schools you went to, the culture in which you live, and by the force of reason itself, which makes you powerless to move away from the expected,” she had said. “Unless you recapitulate your life, you will live and die the way your parents did. You don't have to look any further than your family to know what is waiting for you.”

Her words had given me a tremendous jolt because to repeat my parents lives was the last thing I wanted to do. Yet in spite of the *recapitulation*, a mysterious force was still making me perceiving in terms of my given mold. All theaters according to my past experience had had roofs on them, so the present one could be no exception. I didn’t know what had made me suddenly realize that my assumption was faulty. Perhaps, the same force that had made me put a roof over my head, now, allowed me to see that there was no roof there. That was the mysterious force of *intent* that phenomenologists analyze and which sorcerers try to alter and disrupt through their practices.

According to the phenomenologists, I fleshed out perception, and gave it a spacial and temporal congruence. Perception came ready made. All one had to do was to learn certain categories as a child and the world was there in front of one’s eyes consistent and complete and unchangeable. It is up to the sorcerers to show us that that certainty is not all that there is to the world. That it is possible to alter perception, to break out of it's bounds and to create a different, yet still consistent, reality.

I once asked Clara why the layout of her house didn’t seem stable, but shifted depending on from where one observed it.

“It’s the sorcerer’s *intent* that has constructed the house and has imbued it with power. It is permitted with a special kind of energy capable of transforming it from an ordinary house into a place of power. Perhaps, one day, you will construct your own house and place in it that special inconceivable sorcerers’ intent.”

“I wouldn’t know how to do that, Clara,” I said. “I don’t have any power.”

She laughed and said everyone has the power to stop their stupidity and indulgence, but that some people are too lazy or afraid to use it. Once one moves away from the self by practicing

the *recapitulation* and the *sorcery passes* and quieting the internal dialogue, one can intrinsically become something else. Just as the sorcerers' house became something else under the powerful and impeccable *intent* of those beings that lived in it.

It was clear from her words that for sorcerers, perception held a different kind of intentionality; that different premises were used from the ones governing our every day life. In a sorcerer's house, a wall could disappear, or perhaps a roof could fly off, or a door that wasn't there before could suddenly open. It would all be congruent with the sorcerer's way of perceiving, with his energetic configuration, which was lightness and fluidity itself. The barriers of perception were not rigid.

I returned my attention to the film. My body was adjusting to the new parameters of my environment. Rather than feeling cooped up in a stuffy theater with the air conditioning blasting, I felt that the expanse above me was endless. The air was fresh and the odors that had been so stifling before, had completely vanished. Perception was indeed a limitless, mysterious affair. For out of the billions of possibilities that exist in the universe, man isolates only a few. It is his ability to select and isolate that gives him a sense of security, reduces dissonance, and enables him to live in what he believes is a relatively sate environment where death has no immediate place. Yet to move away from the known, one must, as the phenomenologists do, question ones basic taken for granted ways of perceiving. But to question the certainty of one's own reality, one needs a minimal chance to perceive it differently. Only then might one learn something that one didn't already know; or see something one hadn't already seen.

I realized then, that what Clara and Emilito had tried to teach me, was a new way of perceiving with the body; a way in which the personal or psychological self did not take precedence. Countless times, they had tried to make me cognizant that there are other possibilities of perception open to us, possibilities not included in our normal every day understanding of the world. They had insisted that by means of a thorough *recapitulation* of one's life, one could empty the warehouse of one's familiar items, and venture into uncharted terrain. Letting go of the known and habitual was the key, they had said. Storing energy to move, was the means.

"Of what do I let go?" I kept insisting.

"Of your expectations, of what others expect of you, in short, of everything you are, was or hope to be," Clara had replied. "Let go and allow the energy to work directly on your senses, without interpreting and thinking with your puny mind. If you have to interpret, then use the sorcerers' way, which is to make your categories, then throw them away."

"Tell me Clara, what exactly is a sorcerer?" I had asked.

“A sorcerer is someone who through discipline and conserving energy is able to perceive more than the everyday world,” she replied.

Gradually, it became clear to me that sorcerers had their own way of perceiving and interpreting. The *intent* set up by a long line of sorcerers, each adding to it his own power, his own understanding, his own personal explanations, led to an alternate reality, just as real and predictable as the one into which we were born. One had to use sorcery to understand perception, then apply it's techniques to break the barriers that keep us imprisoned.

“But are we forever condemned to explain and interpret the world?” I asked.

Clara shook her head. “No. Finally one arrives at the point where no explanation is needed or could ever be given. There, one stops thinking and silently immerses oneself in the mystery that surrounds us.”

Chapter 7: Vicam Station

I had not slept well. The dreams I had were so vivid that they could have actually happened, I woke up feeling exhausted for I had been walking over hilly terrain all night. Over breakfast, I asked Carlos to tell me where we were going and what I was to expect upon getting there.

“All I can say is that I’m going to take you to meet some people,” he said matter-of-factly. “And there is no way of knowing what to expect when we get to the party because power is unpredictable.”

“The party? What kind of party?”

“A gathering, a fiesta,” Carlos said as he signaled the waitress for the check.

“In that case I’d better change into something more suitable,” I told him.

While Carlos paid the check, I hurried back to my room to change. The only dressy clothes in my travel bag were a beige linen skirt and a sleeveless silk blouse, I had purchased with the money Nelida had left me. I had put the garments in the bag at the last moment with no thought of ever wearing them. Now I put them on quickly and hurried out the door. Carlos was standing by the car checking the coolant under the hood.

“Where exactly is this party?” I asked trying to keep a lid on my excitement.

“In the Yaqui town of Bacum,” he said closing the hood with a bang. “As I told you, I want you to meet some people I’ve been associated with. They are having a small gathering in your honor.”

“My honor? But I’ve never met them, have I?”

“No, you haven’t, but they are anxious to meet you.”

“Why? Did you tell them about me? When did you see them?”

We had not left each other’s company since we had crossed the border. Unless Carlos had slipped out of his room during the night, there was no way he could have met anyone. Perhaps someone had telephoned or sent him a message. A strange agitation possessed me. The only people I knew in Mexico were Clara, Nelida and Mr. Abelar, and of course Emilito, who I was certain was not one to attend social gatherings.

“I can’t wait to meet them,” I said excitedly. “Do I look alright?”

Carlos scanned me from head to toe. “Don’t you have some proper walking shoes?”

“I can’t wear hiking boots with this outfit,” I said. “It would ruin the look.”

I realized that I was going to great lengths to impress the people I was going to meet, to the extent of wearing uncomfortable dress sandals, but I wanted to look elegant, not as though I had been trekking in the desert with one outfit to my name. Besides, Carlos had stipulated that the party was in someone’s house and that we were going to drive there. I didn’t see too much walking on the agenda.

“Alright then, let’s go,” Carlos said. I got in the car, trying hard not to wrinkle my skirt.

We drove out of Guaymas then headed southeast towards the Yaqui towns. It was obvious that Carlos had driven on Mexican roads many times, for the car hugged the road as he negotiated the curves in an expert manner. Nevertheless, every time the road disappeared around a bend, I held my breath hoping that we would not be surprised by an oncoming truck or bus passing in our lane. Placed along the roadside, as a constant reminder of a tragic mishap, were wooden crosses or shrines with wilted flowers marking the spot where a car had gone off the road, or

there had been a collision, or a person had accidentally been run down. To my distress, these morbid memorials were disturbingly numerous.

We came to a small town made up of a cluster of adobe houses with doors opening into dark rooms that looked like caves. In an open courtyard delineated with cane fences, I spotted a fat white chicken being taunted by two smaller reddish hens. Next to a house was a rust covered car with no wheels, the remnants of an accident, and having been abandoned there, never moved again.

“Is this one of the Yaqui town?” I asked.

“No, this is Empalme. The Yaqui towns are further ahead. Bacum, where we are headed, is one of the Eight Pueblos regarded by the Yaqui as being located on sacred ground. The Rahum chronicles lists them as having been established before the coming of the Spaniards.”

“What is the Rahum chronicles?”

“It is a list of Memorable Dates in Yaqui history. According to the chronical, there were four great men who called the people together and led them around the boundaries of Yaqui country. They went to Cabora on the Cocoraqui arroyo, from there to Takalaim, the peak just north of Guaymas. As they went along the boundary they preached and sang with the people, thus, establishing the boundary line of Yaqui Territory. After that, they founded the Eight Pueblos. Singing of the Boundary and establishing the towns sometime in the remote past is the solemn belief about the origin of their tribal territory.”

“What are the other seven towns?” I asked.

“Cocorit, Vicam, Torim, Potam, Rahum, Huirivis, and Belem,” Carlos said. “They were situated along the lower sixty miles of the Yaqui River, but during the late nineteenth century, the main channel of the Yaqui River below Potam shifted sharply and Belem was left completely without water, and the water supply to Huirivis and Rahum was severely curtailed.”

“What happened to the people in these places?”

“They had to relocate elsewhere. Many were given land by the people of Potam, others moved to Empalme or started new settlements, but with the steady encroachment of Mexicans into their lands, most of the Yaquis have left the original sites, such as Bacum, and have set up new villages elsewhere, often with the same name. The same thing happened in Vicam. A new village center, called Vicam Station was established on the railroad in Vicam territory.

However, the majority of the people now living there are Mexicans."

We passed another settlement, more clusters of low, flat roofed adobe houses surrounded by cane fences held in place with crooked posts. A fat women with a shawl over her head, stood in a doorway, watching the cars passing on the highway. Next to the house were a pair of dusty gray donkeys tethered in a small corral with a sloping ramada. An old man, who could barely make it up the hill, was pushing a four-wheeled cart full of manure. Elsewhere, a group of men were standing near the roadside as if waiting for a bus or truck to come along and pick them up and take them to Guaymas. They waved at us as we passed. A mangy dog barked and ran after the car as we slowed down for a curve, then we sped up and left the dog biting a cloud of dust.

Around noon, Carlos turned off the main highway onto a well packed dirt road. We drove through the heat and dust to a small cluster of adobe houses placed in a haphazard fashion with no regular block or street plan. Some of the houses had corrugated tin roofs with adobe walls. They were lined up one against the other in a group of four or five room additions that would allow an extended family to live together. Sometimes a cane fence shut them off completely from their neighbors.

"Is this where the Yaqui Indians live?" I asked rolling up my window so the dust wouldn't get in the car.

Carlos pointed in the opposite direction. "No. The Yaqui Indians live on the other side of the highway behind those cane fences we saw earlier as we drove up. The Mexicans, or yorims as the Yaqui call them, live in these houses."

Carlos said that Mexican houses in Vicam Station were better built than those on the other side of the main highway. These had cement floors, some electricity, and families owned television sets, radios, bicycles and sometimes even a car or truck.

"What about the Yaqui Indians? How do they live?" I asked.

"Their houses have dirt floors, no electricity and they have to bring in water from the wells or irrigation ditches in five gallon gasoline cans," Carlos replied.

"Even here it seems that it's important to be born on the right side of the highway," I said. "The entire world is divided into the 'have's' and the 'have-not's'."

Carlos said that demarcations and comparisons were universal; that there were always people

who had and those that didn't, no matter how poor they were.

"Dichotomies are a part of the human condition," he explained. "They are built into language, which is based on contrast and opposition. Like day and night, male and female."

"Hotdogs and hamburgers," I added.

He gave me a quizzical look. I told Carlos that as children on hot summer days, my brothers and I used to run through the sprinklers naked. They would tease me saying that I didn't have a hot dog appendage the way they had. They said mine looked like a hamburger. When I insisted that hamburgers were better than hot dogs, they immediately demonstrated the contrary by peeing in perfect arcs. When I tried futility to do the same, they laughed because I could only tinkle straight down.

"They had convinced me that I was born without something essential," I told Carlos, "that I was deficient, and that feeling dogged me for the rest of my life. I felt cheated for not having been born a male."

Carlos said "Hot dogs aren't any better than hamburgers!" laughing. "You have been fooled by the authority and certainty that males have as children that they are superior by virtue of the fact that they are desired by their parents whereas females usually are not. Males depart from a more privileged position, but we are not intrinsically superior."

I remembered Clara assuring me of the same fact. "The womb is the giver of life," she had said. "It can create, be a source of strength, move things and make things happen. You're a fool to blindly accept a position of inferiority without question. Why not accept a position of strength and confidence instead. The womb can give you all that and more. It is the organ of life itself."

A group of children ran after the car playfully hurling small rocks at it. Carlos parked in front of a house with a blue curtain covering the entrance. Instantly, young boys crowded around the car stroking it and kicking the tires. Others kept their distance and watched wide eyed as we stepped out of the car.

"Is this where the party is?" I asked avoiding the eyes of the children.

Carlos shook his head. "No, but I have to pay my respects to some friends, first. They've always been very kind to me."

A woman wearing a white embroidered blouse and a long faded blue skirt and maroon apron

came out to greet us. Her skin was brown and smooth, and her eyes were shiny, black, and friendly. Carlos introduced her as doña Mercedes, who smiled warmly as she grasped my hand in a firm handshake. She pulled the curtain aside and invited us inside her home. The room was semi-dark, the walls were of stucco and the cement floor had been recently swept with water. I was surprised how cool it was. A reddish curtain, tacked to the window, gave the room a mellow glow. The curtain fluttered in the breeze and let light through as it billowed away from the window.

Through an open doorway, I could see an iron cot, like the ones lined up in army barracks. A chest-of-drawers with an alter on top stood next to the bed. I saw a crucifix draped with a rosary and a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Leaning against it was a photograph of a young man. The shrine was flanked with flowers and two lighted white votive candles. All I could think was that somebody had recently died. For it looked like a shrine to the memory of a departed family member.

We sat down on a maroon sofa that had lost most of it's stuffing, I kept sinking in deeper until I hit a hard board. The springs were poking my bottom uncomfortably but I thought it would be impolite to stand up and sit elsewhere. Two girls around eight and ten, from time to time poked their heads into the room from behind the blue curtain, and let out exuberant giggles. Carlos stopped his conversation with doña Mercedes long enough to play peek-a-boo with the girls. Then the hostess said something to Carlos in rapid Spanish I could not follow.

“Doña Mercedes says Benny should be back any moment,” Carlos said. “He just went to the store to buy sodas.”

“Did he know we were coming?” I asked.

“Someone had seen the car on the road,” he replied, “so he knew we would be stopping by his house the way I always do.”

I was eager to meet Benny, doña Mercedes’ youngest son. Carlos had said he was in his mid-twenties and that sometimes when he did fieldwork in Vicam, he stayed in the back room which Benny occupied when he was not away constructing irrigation ditches for the huge cooperative farms owned by the Mexican government. His older brother, Raul, had recently died in a landslide while dynamiting to build a tunnel through a hill.

“Is this the Benny who wants the shower?” I whispered to Carlos.

Carlos nodded. On our drive from Guaymas, he had told me a story about a friend of his whose

dream was to live in the United States. He said that every time he visited his house, Benny begged Carlos to hide him in the trunk of his car and smuggle him across the border, Carlos had always refused, but this did nothing to impede their friendship.

Benny had felt fate had dealt him a harsh blow for allowing him to be born on the wrong side of the Rio Bravo. Especially when his mother, who while pregnant with him, had been visiting relatives in Tucson, could have had her child there, thereby making him a citizen of the United States. He was constantly talking about going north, boasting that he had made it to Arizona twice, but had been caught and deported. Benny knew what kind of cars Americans drove; the large houses they lived in, and he had even been in the well-stocked department stores in Phoenix.

One day, coming home from working in the fields, Benny was washing up in the back of his house over a water trough. He again asked Carlos to hide him in the trunk of his car when he left for the United States the flowing day.

“I’d give and arm and a leg to have a decent shower,” Benny had told him.

Carlos assured his friend that although he couldn’t take him to the United States, his second dream would be fulfilled: he would have the shower of his dreams.

Benny looked surprised. “That’s impossible,” he said.

“No, really,” Carlos had insisted. “When I was a boy, I helped my grandfather build a shower on his farm. I’ll build one just like it for you.”

Carlos had described how he could connect a pipe to the water storage tank in the back of the house. With a series of pulleys and with the help of gravity, the water would run into a smaller tank outside the cooking area. A chain hooked up to a plug, when released, would allow the water to rush through a shower head with enough pressure to douse whoever stood underneath. He would even build a cane barrier for privacy and allow the water to be collected in a trough below for recycling.

“You’re crazy,” Benny said after listening to Carlos’ plans. “What kind of shower is that? I may as well bathe in the irrigation ditch.”

Carlos admitted that he was stunned.

“I want a real shower with tile walls, a glass door with swans engraved on it like I saw in the

‘Home and Garden’ magazine; and real plumbing with hot and cold water all year around.”

Carlos confessed that it had not occurred to him that that was what his friend had in mind. He had to admit that Benny was right; such a shower was impossible to construct where he lived.

“Were you still friends after that?” I had asked.

“Yes, but the gifts I always brought with me, the clothes for his two sisters, the radios, the portable T.V., aways seemed inadequate.”

Doña Mercedes’ curtain opened and a tall slim young man with a winning smile entered, wearing American Levi’s, a black leather jacket and a baseball cap. He embraced Carlos by repeatedly slapping both palms on his back. He glanced at me sitting on the sofa then smiled shyly as we were introduced. After exchanging a few English phrases, he seemed to have exhausted his repertoire and the conversation reverted back to Spanish.

Through an opening in the curtain, I watched the girls playing outside. At one point doña Mercedes took me to the back porch area covered by a ramada. It was also the kitchen area where food was cooking in huge aluminum pots over a pit lined with stones. To the side, I could see a water holding tank. I scrutinized the area with my contractor's eye, wondering if it would be possible to construct a shower. There was adequate space, but, of course, no plumbing.

I thought of the beautiful bathroom in Clara's house, with water mysteriously running under the floor. The water had been piped in from a natural underground spring, but there was no running water around Benny’s house, except the water from the well, whose use was restricted and had to be brought to the house in a bucket. I realized that to build a shower in Benny’s house was an impossible undertaking, the entire community would have to be renovated.

After a polite interval, we got up and said goodbye. Benny came with us to accompany us part of the way. He said we needed him to give us directions, for the roads were not marked and we could easily get lost if we left the highway. Besides, he too, wanted to visit Bacum where his favorite uncle lived.

As we drove, Carlos talked with Benny in the front seat. I could tell Carlos was getting nervous. His hands gripped the steering wheel tightly as it he were clenching his fists. At first I thought it was because Benny had hitched a ride, but then I concluded it was our destination that made him nervous.

I, too, was ill at ease. After a thorough *recapitulation*, I came to the conclusion that I was never fond of social gatherings because I was too stiff, too afraid of making a fool of myself. Later, I had a bona fide reason for not to get entangled with people and their enterprises. Both Clara and Emilito had warned me not to fall prey to the mesmeric commands governing social interaction.

“The only thing a man is after,” Clara had said with her customary frankness, “is to maneuver a woman into a position where he can leave his luminous worms inside her body.”

“What are you talking about?” I demanded.

Clara explained that during the sex act, a man leaves his energy inside a woman’s body. These luminous worms, as she had called them, by feeding off the energy of the woman, force her to support her man energetically against her will or her knowledge. Sorcerers don’t waste their sexual energy, but store it to be used for *dreaming* or *stalking*.

“Both of these activities take enormous amounts of energy,” Clara said. “Our basic energy is our sexual energy. So we must not dissipate it in a momentary exchange with someone we don’t give a hoot about.”

She said that women are mesmerized by men on an energetic level. Only by *recapitulating* her life, can a woman free herself from the burden of having to continually place her energy at the disposal of men.

The car suddenly swerved onto a dirt road, and nearly collided with a giant saguaro cactus that had fallen onto it's side. From then on the ride was bumpy. I rolled up the window so the dust wouldn’t get into the car and scanned the terrain through the insect spotted glass. I expected to see a colonial mansion like Clara’s, hidden among the dense shrubs and mesquite groves, but all I saw was a cluster of houses made of sun dried mud brick, held together with packed straw, the typical construction of the area.

Carlos parked the car on a gravel shoulder.

“Are we here?” I asked lamely. “I don’t see any place big enough for a party.”

“We have to let Benny off here,” he said, “This is where his uncle lives.”

We said good bye and promised to meet again the next day to look for Pascola masks Carlos wanted to donate to the University's Ethnographic Museum. Then Benny gave the car’s fender

a firm pat, as if to send it on it's way, and we continued on the road for a few more miles. In front of a wall of dense shrubbery, we stopped again.

“We have to walk a bit,” Carlos said getting out of the car.

My heart sank at the thought of walking through the underbrush in my dress sandals, but walk we did. Or rather, Carlos walked. I hobbled behind him like a lame mule. My linen skirt was covered with dust, and my bare arms scratched from the underbrush.

“I have to take off my nylons,” I said, after about twenty minutes of trekking. “They have too many runs in them. I can’t show up with polka-dot legs.”

Carlos agreed. I stepped behind a tolan tree and discretely removed my panty-hose and took the opportunity to urinate out of sheer nervousness. I stuffed the nylons into my shoulder bag and caught up with Carlos who was looking at a small cactus down the path.

I had no idea where we were going. All I could do was to follow Carlos, cool and comfortable in his long sleeved shirt and Levi’s. I envied the agility with which he walked over the uneven terrain in his hiking boots. From time to time, he held aside a tree branch or a thorny shrub as we passed.

“Can’t we go back to the car to change my shoes?” I asked knowing we couldn’t. I really wanted to go further than that. I wanted to drive to a motel, check in and sit under the shade of an umbrella by the pool, sipping a cool soda.

“No. We can’t go back,” he said decisively. “They’re expecting us and we’re late as it is.”

I began to pout.

“We’re almost there,” he said reassuringly.

The smell of smoke made me pick up my pace for I knew we were nearing habitation. My stomach was growling; I had worked up a ferocious appetite. I was wondering if I would be able to eat the food or if I would have to settle for politely nibbling, when I heard Carlos say, “I see they’ve already started the festivities. Hurry, they’re expecting us.”

We crossed a wooden bridge over a gully; there was water under it in the arroyo. The broken planks creaked as we passed. I paused to looked down. The water was muddy and slow moving. It looked like a stream of running milk chocolate. It must have come down from the

area of the Obregon Dam where there was a reddish clay deposit. The river of chocolate I dubbed it, for it looked like thick cocoa.

Then I saw the house nested among a clump of manzanilla trees. It was not a beautiful estate, like Clara's, but a group of humble adobe huts. Children and chickens ran in the courtyard. A mangy dog was scrounging for scraps. Around the side of the house, a donkey was tied to a stake in the ground, being able to graze only as far as the rope around his neck would allow him.

I felt a moment of sheer terror. I was no different from that donkey with a noose around it's neck that didn't allow it to move beyond the limits of it's known world. Yet, we are all like that. If we pulled on the rope too hard, we would strangle ourselves. We have means at our disposal to cut our ties, yet fear prevents us from ever trying, and even as we cut one rope, another rope becomes visible, in a gigantic knot tied with an infinite number of ropes, all serving the same purpose: to hold us fixed and not allow us to stray from the life into which we were born.

As I crossed the creaky bridge on shaky steps, I knew Clara and Nelida would not be among the invited guests: I would not meet them here today.

Chapter 8: The Fiesta

The houses were marked by a path of round river rocks. A cooking fire was burning nearby; I could smell the familiar scent of mesquite wood smoke, common to that area. We followed the narrow lane to the back of a house which had a single window with no glass or screen. A ramada covered an open kitchen where cooking implements and baskets hung from nails pounded into the two outside posts. Corn tied in bundles laid on top of the awning to dry in the sun.

Underneath the ramada, two women were preparing food over an open grill. One was seated on a plank bench in front of a matate. She was flattening tortillas in her palms then placing them in the skillet to cook over the fire. The other woman took charge of turning them over and removing them when they were done. Relatives or guests sat on orange crates turned on their sides, or they stood in small groups drinking sodas. Chickens and a couple of mean looking dogs had the run of the compound. A girl, six or seven, dressed in Levi's overalls and a dirty t-shirt, was eating corn on the cob near the threshold.

I stood there, surrounded by strange sights and sounds and a hoard of smiling people. All I

could think of was that my feet hurt, for a tiny pebble had wedged itself between the straps of my sandals. I regretted that I had not put on proper walking shoes. I had wanted to look stylish but everything seemed to have conspired against me. My hair had come undone, my skirt was wrinkled, my blouse was torn and I was perspiring profusely.

Everyone embraced Carlos as if he were an old friend. As I was introduced to them, they looked me over and politely shook my hand. They seemed happy to meet me. They complemented my clothes and examined the color and texture of my hair as if I were a monkey in a zoo. One woman looked concerned at the scratches on my arms. The little girl was shy and avoided me altogether. A dog came and urinated at my feet, and one of the ladies had to apologetically shoo it away.

A petite woman with a long black braid down her back and pointed white teeth asked me to sit down on an orange crate and hospitably handed me a soda. I thanked her and after surreptitiously wiping off the top of the open bottle, I took a sip. The conversation began and I looked on as everyone spoke in rapid Spanish. Whenever anyone addressed me directly, I smiled and shrugged, incapable of using the phrases I had learned in my conversation classes. I realized that those classes, had not prepared me for real social interaction where everyone talked at once in an animated way.

I passed the time watching a group of recently hatched chicks pecking the dirt floor. It was strange to see chickens and dogs running around what must have been the family's living quarters. I wondered if I had the constitution or stamina to live under such conditions for an extended period of time.

Carlos laughed and was totally at ease and engaging as he told stories. From time to time, he nodded at me, indicating that I was the topic of conversation. Everyone looked at me and smiled, and I smiled back, nodding, wondering what they were saying. A young man asked him a question; the laughter stopped and everyone's gaze fell on me. I felt as if they were waiting for me to say something but I hadn't the foggiest idea what that might be, so I just nodded and everyone laughed louder.

"They're wondering how we met," Carlos explained. "I told them that you are a student of Anthropology and that I am your professor."

The people smiled and giggled.

"Has he taught you what he knows how to do best?" whispered a woman behind me.

I was shocked to hear English spoken, and I turned around. It was the woman from the restaurant in Santa Ana. The lady who had been filling in for her sister. I hadn't recognized her before; for now her hair was braided and she was wearing a white embroidered dress. I stared at her dumbfounded trying to figure out the meaning of her question and what she was doing at the party. I had assumed, incorrectly, that no one at the gathering spoke English. As I stared at her, I realized that her sparkling eyes were amber, not black, and that she had olive skin and that she was really very beautiful. For the first time I saw her as a person, not just as a generic Mexican or an Indian.

Her mean stare made me realize that I never looked at people directly, but only at their outlines, their general shapes, and that I only gave the impression that I was looking at them. It wasn't that I couldn't see well or needed glasses. On the contrary, I prided myself on my 20-20 vision. It was more a case of being afraid or too self absorbed to look at anyone in the eye, for I didn't want anyone to look at me. I realized that in spite of my belief that I wanted to be noticed, I also wished very much to remain hidden.

I wanted to ask the woman what she meant by her comment, but she had already moved away. I returned my attention to the main group. The conversation seemed endless; the wooden crate beneath me was numbing my tailbone. After a while I was no longer paying attention, nor bothering to pretend that I was listening. I felt like an outsider, as if I had been thrown into a raging river in which it was pointless to try to swim. No more fake smiles and nervous chuckling, pretending I was having a good time. I felt I was pouting, and on the verge of getting up and going for a walk, even though I knew it would have been rude to do so. What's worse, self-pity and discontent were creating in an internal dialogue that was anything but friendly.

I was annoyed with Carlos for bringing me to a place where no one paid any attention to me. Carlos had intimated that I would be the guest of honor but after the initial curiosity wore off, I was all but ignored. Besides, I had expected a lively party in a house with plenty of music and good things to eat. Soft sofas, maybe even a hired Mariachi group playing old Mexican favorites with perhaps a tango

thrown in for a continental flair, and deep down, I had expected to see Clara, and Nelida and Mr. Abelar. As I began to focus on my profound disappointment, I became increasingly morose.

After a while, I noticed some black spots flying in the air around me. At first, I thought the heat and my fatigue had caused my eyes to play tricks on me, but looking closer, I saw that the spots seemed to be jumping up from the ground about three feet into the air. Lulled into a

stupor by the foreign sounds, I occupied myself following the movements of the black specks. They seemed to be everywhere shooting off at random. As soon as one landed, another one bounced up. It was odd that no one else in the room took notice of them.

I was relieved when a robust Indian woman in a blue dress, who seemed to be the hostess, stood up and suggested we all move to a table under some trees where “carnitas” and beans were being served. The lady piled some roast pork on a plate along with a ladle of beans and rice and handed it to me with a bent fork. As I was eating, I felt that my legs were beginning to itch. I thought there must be mosquitoes flying around under the table so I tried to brush them away with a hand.

One of the women noticed my movements and made some comment, about keeping one’s hands above the table in polite circles. Everyone laughed except me. I didn’t dare examine my legs in front of everyone, but when I casually put a hand to my calf, I felt that my legs were full of bumps. I began to scratch, until the hostess noticed me and looked at my legs. I saw then that they were completely covered with bites. It dawned on me that the jumping black specks that entertained me earlier during the conversation were giant fleas, feasting on my bare legs. Never before had I seen fleas so big and so numerous and so viscous.

A striking woman with jet black hair pulled back into a bun, got up, grabbed my hand and led me inside an adjacent house. Carlos followed and assured me not to worry because if I was going to get bitten by anything, I was in the right place. The woman whose house I was in was a powerful sorceress. She gave my hand a squeeze as if to reaffirm what Carlos had said. She had high cheekbones, a strong wide mouth, and smooth, coffee colored skin drawn tightly over her face, giving her an eerie mask-like appearance. She looked a bit groggy too, as if she had just awaken from a long sleep.

“Her name is Zuleica,” Carlos said.

With an imperceptible movement of her chin, doña Zuleica signaled for Carlos to sit on a bench near the door as it to stand guard, and led me to sit on a chair and prop my legs on a stool. She examined my legs and shook her head and clicked her tongue as if she didn’t like what she saw. Then she said something to Carlos in rapid Spanish.

“Zuleica says the flea bites are a bad omen,” Carlos said.

“What do you mean a bad omen?” I asked.

“It means your life will be difficult, filled with many obstacles along the way,” Carlos said.

“Unless you stop your overwhelming concern with the self, troubles will feast on you the way the fleas

have attacked your legs.”

I cringed. It was just what I needed: more obstacles. As if there weren’t enough hurdles to overcome. Doña Zuleica looked at me sympathetically and said something about staying with her so she could heal me.

“She wants me to tell you that there is a way to avoid trouble,” Carlos continued. “But for that you will have to change. She says you will have to be reborn.”

I did not understand in what way I could change. I had done a thorough *recapitulation* of my life, beginning from the present and moving backwards to my very first memories. Then I had done another one, moving forward from my very first memories to the present, and what was so bad with the way I was living anyway, I wondered. I was going to school, grooming a romance with knowledge the way Emilito had recommended. I felt I was doing everything I needed to be, and yet Zuleica’s grim prognosis frightened me.

Doña Zuleica looked directly into my eyes and said something more. I turned to Carlos bewildered.

“She wants to help you,” he said. “She says that unless you stop pampering yourself, the bit of power that you have stored will turn against you and you will be worse off than before.”

“What can I do?” I asked. “Tell me the steps so I can follow them.”

“She says there are no steps,” Carlos said. “There is only an overall feeling that comes when one has decided wholeheartedly to follow the path of knowledge impeccably. Zuleica savs that you still lack that feeling.”

I let out a sigh of sheer defeat. I didn’t even have the energy to argue.

“She could help you get stronger, but you would have to stay with her,” Carlos said. “Personally,” he added, “I would advise against that.”

“Why shouldn’t I?” I asked, and just to be contrary added, “It sounds like a good idea.”

I had no intention of staying in a flea ridden place with a woman who looked like she was

either groggy or drunk. On top of that, from the way she peered at me, I could tell there was a streak of madness in her that she could not disguise. I had seen that look before, in Emilito, and at times, in myself.

"Zuleica is a master *dreamer*," he said. "You're not used to her touch. It might do you more harm than good."

I had no idea what he was talking about so I remained silent.

I scanned the room. A mattress was on the floor covered with burlap bags. Baskets of dried herbs and roots were piled in a corner. Jars with powders of different colors set were on a table. The place had a chaotic sense about it, the smell of fear. I would probably get eaten alive by fleas, or rats or bitten by bugs and snakes. At the very least I would be totally out of my element, and inconvenienced to the maximum.

I shook my head. "I have to go back to Los Angeles, to go to the University," I said to Zuleica.

Doña Zuleica smiled in a most eerie fashion that made the hair on my arms stand on end. She patted my hand, her face full of disdain. Then she rubbed my swollen legs with a foul smelling lotion which temporarily afforded some relief from the itching. She turned her back for a moment and took from a shelf a jar of light brown powder that looked like ground chocolate. She sprinkled some into a tin cup and added bottled water to it. She gave the mixture a stir, then handed it to me to drink.

I looked at Carlos for a sign as to whether or not to drink it. He in turn glanced at doña Zuleica for a cue. Her nearly imperceptible nod caused him to say, "It's alright to drink. Doña Zuleica says it will relieve the itching."

I took the cup from Zuleica's outstretched hands, braced myself for something bitter, and took a few sips. Surprisingly it didn't taste foul as one might have expected. I was certain there was cocoa powder in that jar. As I gulped the rest of the drink down, I gagged a bit, for the pork had been very salty and had given me a great thirst. Doña Zuleica stroked my back, then took the cup, surprised that I had drunk it's contents so fast. I realized then that she had expected me to sip it slowly, and before I could ask what was in it, the impact of her brew hit me full force.

I nearly fell off the chair. The next thing I knew I was slumped against the mattress on the floor. My body was numb; I couldn't move. I sensed something licking my face. It was a huge dog. I tried to push it away in disgust, but my limbs were rubbery. Then the black dog moved

away and I looked into his yellow eyes. Instantly I recognized him; it was Manfred, the being Emilito found as a puppy and had raised in Clara's house. My heart leapt with joy. Then liquid love flowed between our eyes and I reached out to embrace him. That surge of pure affection gave me the power to sit up. I put my arms around Manfred's neck, but my arms went right through him. Manfred had no substance, and for that matter, neither had I. We sort of blended together in one exuberant ball of bliss.

I was so happy to see him, that we rolled on the floor making one furry bundle, and I no longer cared if there were fleas on the floor or if Manfred or I were covered with them. I heard childish squealing, and I didn't think it was coming from Manfred, so it must have been I who was making those sounds. Then someone came and abruptly pulled us apart. I looked up and saw John Michael Abelar standing there. His face was all aglow and rounder and fuller than I remembered, but it was unmistakably he, and he had a very stern expression.

"Don't waste your energy cavorting," he said in a gruff tone. "Zuleica didn't give you a love potion."

"What did she give me?" I wanted to ask, but I couldn't voice the words.

Then I realized I didn't have to talk in the normal way; I could just think my question. I heard a female voice very near me; it was Nelida, and she could understand what I was thinking.

"Zuleica did something to boost your energy into the second attention," Nelida explained. "But as usual, it pushed you to the brink and beyond."

"But how did Manfred get here and Mr. Abelar and you?"

Mr. Abelar's face softened as he said "we came to meet you in the presence of the young *nagual*, Carlos, but since you were still lost in concerns with yourself, we couldn't meet you in your ordinary state. You wouldn't have given the members of my party the time of the day."

"And I, being responsible for you, couldn't allow that," Nelida added. "I know you are capable of a more exquisite maneuver, Taisha."

"Oh, but I would have been honored to meet them all," I protested. "I've waited so long for this encounter."

"Then why were you rude and bored to death, when you were introduced to some of the members of our party?" Nelida asked.

“When was this? I never met anyone.”

“Of course you did,” Nelida said.

“Where? When?” I tried to organize my thoughts but there was no linear structure on which to hang them.

“In the house where the fleas bit you,” Nelida replied. “You were bored stiff and couldn’t wait to get out of there. You didn’t even have the courtesy to give them your attention.”

“But those were just ordinary people, weren’t they? I didn’t know that they were part of the *nagual*’s sorcery group.”

“Of course you knew, but being such a superior woman, you didn’t have the *power* to see that let alone act on it,” Nelida said. “Whenever anyone wanted to approach, you turned your back and snubbed them.”

“But I don’t speak Spanish very well,” I protested.

“It’s not your lack of Spanish, but your self-importance that hinders you,” Nelida insisted. “You regarded everyone as poor Indians who weren’t fit to wipe your feet.”

I wanted to protest but something in me knew she was right.

“The young *nagual* had to apologize to everyone in your behalf,” Nelida continued, “otherwise they would have thrown you out on your ear. You're lucky you got away with only a few flea bites. The fleas were relentless with you and that was the omen. You have to be treated ruthlessly. If Zuleica hadn’t helped you with her *energy*, you and I wouldn’t be talking now. You would have been booted across that bridge in front of the house, and you would have never returned. Zuleica even asked you to stay with her to teach you how to *stalk* with the *double*, which you refused for petty reasons.”

I looked around. In the corner stood a tall lady, with her hair in a bun. It was Zuleica, she smiled and nodded with brilliant eyes, as if agreeing with all that Nelida had said.

I knew that I had flubbed my chance. My sense of self-importance was still overpowering. If left up to my own devices, I always fell back into the pit of superiority and self-obsession I was accustomed to inhabiting.

“Couldn’t I meet everyone now?” I asked hopefully.

“No, they've already left,” Nelida said.

“Have they given up on me?”

“Practically. Yet, you will meet them one by one, depending on your power,” Nelida replied. “The young *nagual*, who is your guide will take you to meet them. The only one who stuck around was

Manfred; apparently it doesn’t matter to him that you are an imbecile, his affection for you is peerless.”

I heard a sharp bark as if in affirmation, and a feeling of love weld up inside me. “Likewise,” I said and was about to burst out weeping. In fact, tears had already begun to fall. I moved my arm to wipe them, when I felt a warm body next to me tugging at my arm. I turned my head to see a young pretty girl, about my age, winking at me. She had short dark brown, curly hair, delicate features, brown eyes, and an eerie smile like Zuleica's.

“I stuck around too because I’m crazy, just like you,” she said and giggled.

Instantly her eyes became wild, glowing like a doll that had suddenly come to life. I thought that she would devour me with her tiny piranha-like teeth. I wanted to move away, but she held me down with superhuman strength. As she began to climb on top of me, I screamed for Nelida to get her off me.

“I thought you came to Mexico to find love,” she said in a throaty voice. “Well, I’m your man.” She gyrated her hips in a lewd motion then kissed me on the mouth.

As I struggled to free myself, I heard a chorus of laughter in the background.

“You two behave yourselves,” Nelida said and pulled the girl off me. “That’s Josefina. Don’t mind her. She’s always direct and to the point.”

“I didn’t mean to frighten you,” the young girl said in Spanish. She touched my hair affectionately. She was the picture of sweetness and decorum again, “but you were such a shit-ass with everyone, I thought you needed a good fuck.”

My mouth fell open. Such crude language didn't jive with her delicate appearance. She smiled and nodded as if I had better believe her.

"Josefina always speaks the truth," Nelida said, "or she doesn't speak at all. Isn't that right, Josefina?"

The girl nodded mutely. It was then I realized that I had no trouble understanding Spanish. In fact, I had the certainty that I had learned the language somewhere before. Although where, I didn't know.

Nelida came to my rescue. "One can easily understand a different language in the second attention," she said. "Once you bypass the rational mind, you have no difficulty with languages. You used to speak German and Hungarian, and some Spanish, remember?"

That was true. I used to know those languages as a child, but I had forgotten them out of lack of use.

"One never forgets," Nelida said. "The assemblage point simply moves to a different position where that language is no longer in the foreground, but you can always move back. Now you'd better sleep. You've used up just about all the *dreaming energy* Zuleica gave you."

I wanted to ask her how Zuleica gave me *dreaming energy* but then I remembered that there was something missing. It was as if I had misplaced something that had been with me, but I didn't know what it was. Then I heard a voice and the missing piece fell into place, I saw Carlos sitting down next to me and I knew we had know each other for a long, long time. In fact, we had spent a lifetime together. How could I have forgotten the feeling I had for him? I touched his hand and lay down on my left side. Then our hands melted together and I could no longer sustain his image. My eyelids were so heavy that they closed in spite of my effort to keep them open.

"Will I see you again?" I managed to ask Nelida.

Nelida tousled my hair they way she always did. "That depends entirely upon you, on how impeccable you are with yourself and others, but it is the new *nagual's* duty to bring you to freedom. You have been entrusted into each other's care by the spirit itself. Trust him and support him, because his path and yours are forever entwined."

I made her a solemn promise. Then she said something else, maybe even many other things, but I could not remember any of them, because I fell asleep to Nelida's soft commands that

sounded like a lullaby. I dreamed I was suspended from a harness attached to a tree branch. Someone was pushing me as if I were on a swing. I looked down, I saw Carlos reaching up to catch my ankles to give me a push. He was laughing with abandon. Next to him, Emilito was jumping up and down like a big child wanting to play too.

I awoke from a deep sleep. The darkness in the room was intense. It was pitch black; there was no light anywhere. As my eyes became accustomed to the shapes and shadows in the room, I could tell I was laying on the hard mattress. Someone had thrown a blanket over me and the heat of it made the bites on my legs itch terribly. It was all I could do to keep from scratching them. The rough blanket around my face was suffocating me. I smelled it's staleness; it made me sneeze.

Carlos was lying near me. From the sound of his rhythmic breathing, I could tell he was asleep. I was glad that my stifled sneeze had not awaken him. I lay there for a long time, afraid to move or get up. I needed to go to the bushes to relieve myself, but fear of encountering a snake or one of the dogs, kept me from venturing into the darkness. To pass the time, I tried to remember what had happened the previous afternoon.

We had come to a fiesta; I had been introduced to a group of people, then Zuleica had given me a potion to drink; it had knocked me out. What followed was too vague to put into thoughts. I remembered seeing Nelida and Mr. Abelar and a young pretty girl I hadn't met before, and Manfred was there too, barking in the background. I remembered seeing the new *nagual*, and Nelida rubbing my head and telling me things, but then in a flash they were gone and I fell asleep to dream haunting dreams.

Carlos turned onto his side. I tried to fall asleep again but I couldn't. Some part of me was wide awake, fully alert, ready to fight danger, A dog was barking incessantly in the distance. Then, I must have fallen asleep, for the next thing I knew Carlos was shaking me saying it was time to go. He wanted to return to Vicam Station to meet Benny to look for Pascola masks to donate to the ethnological museum.

I put on the long-sleeved shirt and cotton drawstring pants someone left by my shoulder bag, and gratefully slipped into a pair of guaraches. As we crossed the wooden bridge on our way back to where we had parked the car, I turned and glanced at the house one last time. In the distance I saw Zuleica waving at me, smiling as if we shared a secret. I waved back and as our eyes met, I had the certainty that I would meet her again. I would accept her invitation to stay with her, and Emilito would be there too, and my life would change.

Chapter 9: Pascola Masks

My legs were red and swollen. The lotion Zuleica had given me for the flea bites had not helped one bit. On the contrary, something in it seemed to make the bites even more virulent. It reminded me of the time I had had chicken-pox as a child, only now, I was far more uncomfortable.

"What did Zuleica give me that knocked me out?" I asked Carlos as we were driving to Vicam Station.

"Cocoa."

"You mean there was only cocoa powder in that drink? I don't believe it."

Carlos nodded. "She thought you liked hot chocolate. That it would take your mind off the bites."

"I do like it, but it never affected me like that before."

"What affected you was Zuleica's art of mesmerism," he explained. "She can move a person's center of awareness with her dream body. All she has to do is to look you in the eyes, or touch your forehead, or the back of your neck or shoulder blade and you'll go out like a light."

"Are you sure there was nothing in the drink?" I insisted.

"Absolutely. She doesn't need to resort to using drugs or potions. Zuleica is a sorceress of the highest caliber. The *nagual* Julian taught her himself. She has an affinity for you because you are like her, quite a bit crazy. Someday, she'll show you her art."

"What might that be?" I asked, "Knocking people out with a pat on the back?"

Carlos pulled down the visor of the car to shield himself from the sun's glare. "Zuleica is a consummate *dreamer*. She *stalks* with her *dream body*. When you meet her again, she'll teach you how to *stalk* with the *double*."

"What is *stalking* with the *double*?" I asked.

"You'll have to wait until Zuleica shows you," Carlos said. "She's the master of it. As I've said,

she learned from the *nagual* Julian, and from someone else in our linage."

"Who was this other person?"

"A sorcerer of unending accomplishments. All I can tell you is that don Juan's lineage is indebted to this person, just as he is indebted to our lineage."

I wanted to ask more about this mysterious personage and about Zuleica's art, but we had already arrived at Vicam Station. Benny was waiting in front of his house. When he saw our car, he hopped in and said he knew of several people who may have masks for sale. He offered to accompanying us so that we would not get lost. At first, I thought he was just being polite or wanted the company of his friend, but when I saw that an ordinary rock was a sign post, or a cactus indicated a

turn onto a road, it was evident that we needed the guidance of someone who knew the terrain to perfection.

It would be impossible to find anyone's house or store unless one had been there before, sometimes, even then. For, even with Benny in the car, we had to backtrack on several occasions to catch a missed turn onto a road that was barely visible.

We drove across the highway and veered off onto a road that, according to Benny, would take us to Potam, where don Felipe, a mask carver, lived. It was a feat just to find a particular house, for they all looked alike. The typical house had plaited cane walls, sometimes coated heavily with mud, and a roof composed of layers of cane resting on a few mesquite rafters with earth piled on top of the cane. Construction materials included adobe brick, cane with mesquite support posts and rafters. Sometimes, I could see mats of split cane serving as part of the roof. All the houses had two or three rooms and had a ramada which consisted of a roof supported on crooked mesquite posts. Besides offering protection from the sun, the ramada served as a storage area for herbs and corn that were placed on top of it to dry.

The houses were surrounded by fences, five or six feet high, made of plaited cane, which sometimes afforded people complete privacy. I saw corrals with an occasional goat, pig or donkey, and, of course, chickens and the scrawniest dogs south of the border. Everywhere I could smell burning mesquite wood from kitchen fires. What struck me was that, except for the occasional barking of a dog or the cawing of a crow, everything was quiet. I couldn't help notice the sharp contrast from the noisy Mexican community of Vicam where Benny lived and the Yaqui settlements.

“Shall I turn right?” Carlos asked as we drove through the underbrush.

“Eees, turn here,” Benny said pointing out the window.

“Is that the Mesquite tree were I go left?”

“Eees, go left,” Benny replied.

“Do you think the mask maker will be at home?” I asked.

“Eees, he’s always in,” said Benny. “If not we’ll go to the store.”

I tried to figure out why Benny was prefacing all his replies with “eees”. I thought it might be some sort of Spanish expletive used in that part of Sonora, or perhaps, a Yaqui word. As we were waiting for Benny to return from a quick trip to the bushes, I asked Carlos what ‘eees’ meant.

“Benny uses it every time he says something,” I said.

Carlos laughed. “He’s saying ‘yes’ in English. Benny is trying to learn English. Converse with him a little. Don’t be shy.”

When Benny came back, I asked him what the Yaquis sold in their stores.

“Saddles and canned goods,” he said, “Coffee and sugar and Coca-Cola.”

Wherever there was a store, Benny said he knew of it and he intended to take us to all of them.

“Where are all the women?” I asked having passed only men on the road.

“Inside their houses,” Benny replied. “They don’t come out unless they have a reason, like getting water from the well, or wood for the fires or to get supplies from the store.”

“I can’t believe there is a store around here," I said. I could see nothing but low roofed adobes and desert vegetation.

“Eees, we go there now to look for masks,” Benny explained.

We followed a dirt road that was rutted from the rains, until we came to a mud house, like all

the other structures of the area, only perhaps a bit longer. Sacks of grain were piled against one wall. It had no windows, only a door painted turquoise. Several tall Yaqui Indians were standing near the entrance; others were sitting on a plank bench drinking orange and lime sodas. All had on sombreros to shade themselves from the noonday sun. Some men had mustaches and were older, others were young boys in their teens, and, as usual, there were no women.

Carlos parked the car and I followed him and Benny into the store. I was surprised to see a variety of merchandise. There was a long counter, and on the walls were shelves stocked with canned goods as well as sacks of flour, sugar and coffee. One section of the store was devoted to tools and light farm equipment, such as ropes, spades, tools and other implements.

Benny talked to the proprietor with whom he seemed to be on friendly terms. After a while, the man left through a curtained door leading into a back room.

“He has a few masks in the back,” Carlos said to me. “He’s going to bring them out for us to look at.”

Benny opened the cooler and pulled out several sodas which we sipped, while we waited for the man to return. When I looked up, I noticed a girl behind the counter staring at me. She must have come out from the back room because she had not been in the store when we entered, and I was certain she hadn't come through the front door. She had short curly dark hair and beautiful delicate features. She couldn’t have been more than seventeen. Her skin was smooth and brown and she had the biggest black eyes I had ever seen.

Carlos started to talk to her. They spoke in such hushed voice that I could barely hear them, but I could tell from their serious expressions that the two were discussing something important. The girl seemed on the verge of tears. Carlos was trying to console her. He put an arm around her and patted her head. Finally, the girl turned to me and gave me a look of hatred that could make the blood of a lizard curdle, then she slipped thorough the curtain into the back room.

Before I could ask Carlos who the girl was, the owner of the store came back holding three carved wooden masks and laid them on the counter. They were masks used by the dancers during the Pascola celebrations. They were painted black with red markings around the eyes and across the cheeks. Bleached horsehair formed a fringe of bangs over the forehead, and served as eyebrows, while longer strands of horse hair hung down the front of the mask like a goatee or beard. Around the rims were carved triangles and circles. Two had a cross on the forehead, the third mask had a lizard pained on each cheek.

Carlos bargained about the price, for the man did not seem to want to part with all three masks. When Benny started to leave, dragging us with him to show that we were not interested, the man agreed to sell and I saw money changing hands.

On the way out we passed some hats hanging on a rack. Carlos tried a few on until he found one that fit him, which he left on his head. Benny took his worn hat off and put on a new one.

“Pick one out,” Carios said to me. “No one in Sonora goes without a hat.”

The first one I put on seemed to fit, but there was no mirror in the store to see how it looked. I caught my reflection on the side of a stainless steel thermos on the counter. I liked it. I looked less of a foreigner with a sombrero on.

Carlos paid for the hats and sodas. The owner walked out with us and when I looked back, I saw the girl standing in the doorway watching us. For a moment I felt sorry for her. Her options seemed dismally limited. She could marry one of the young men who was standing outside the store admiring her, and then spend her life looking after him and their children. Most likely she would never go more than ten miles out of the area. Perhaps she would visit a relative in one of the neighboring towns for a wedding or a birthday, and there exchange gossip about the latest birth or mourn over someone who had recently died. Or, if she were lucky, she might get a job as a maid in one of the motels in Ciudad Obregon, or Guaymas. In short, the girl’s future was sealed in the grimmest way.

A crow’s loud cawing from a nearby cottonwood tree caught me by surprise. I remember another time when I was having a similar mental dialogue concerning a woman who had served us in the restaurant in Santa Ana, but who had turned out to be a curer. I had been wrong then; and from the way the girl had glared at me, I felt I was wrong again.

I watched the girl through the side mirror as Carlos and Benny talked to the owner and some of the young men standing by the door. One of them seemed to be giving Carlos directions, for he was pointing off into the distance to the east. I sensed that the girl was looking at Carlos with what I could only call admiration or fondness. It struck me then that the girl was in love with him. I felt a pang of jealousy which I immediately tried to hide by smiling at Carlos as he got in the car. As we drove off, leaving Benny to talk with some friends he had run across, I watched the girl watching us until we disappeared behind the dust and shrubs.

“Who is that girl?” I asked as we continued down the dirt road.

Dust was getting in my eyes and made me sneeze.

For a moment Carlos was silent. “That’s Josefina,” he finally said. “Don’t you remember?”

The name was so familiar. Suddenly, my ears popped and I remembered where I had seen her. She was the girl that had accosted me in Zuleica’s house.

“She’s a sorceress!” I gasped. “What’s she doing here? And don’t tell me she’s helping out the owner of the store, like that woman in the restaurant in Santa Ana.”

“No, she just came for some supplies.”

“You mean she lives around here?”

Again a long silence.

“She seems to like you a lot,” I said, “Have you known her long? What were you two whispering about in there?”

Carlos shrugged. “She wants me to take her to the United States,” he said. “I’m teaching her English.”

For an instant I lapsed into a familiar moroseness. I was certain Carlos was teaching her English so he could bring her to the United States.

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... the “self”. These feelings of love and hate, jealously, or envy did not simply go away by changing one’s venue. They were deeply rooted, buried in every cell of our being. To rid ourselves of these feelings, we would have to do more than to recapitulate our lives; we would, in Zuleica’s words, have to become transformed.

The car reached the highway with a thud. I was relieved to see Carlos smiling. Perhaps, he wasn’t attached to the girl in the store after ail, I breathed easier and lost myself watching the shadows and colors the sun cast on the desert landscape as we drove to don Felipe’s, the mask maker’s house.

His house had a wooden cross in the courtyard and was situated on the edge of a cultivated field. It was more spacious than the other houses I had seen, and it was built of good adobe bricks and the dirt around it was clean and well packed.

Carlos asked me to wait in the car while he talked with don Felipe, but I insisted on going inside. Don Felipe introduced us to his wife, who immediately left the room, as if she were too shy to speak to strangers. Don Felipe was elderly, tall, and had a sense of quietude about him. His eyes were not bright and burning, but rather distant, as if looking off somewhere into another world. I suspected he read Spanish, for he had several books on a shelf. In his conversational manner he projected a simplicity and intelligence. He seemed knowledgeable on many subjects.

At one point, I sensed the discussion centered on the Rahum Chronicle and some of the legendary heroes of Yaqui history, for I heard the names of Calixto Muni, Cajeme, Tetabiate and Juan Bandera repeatedly mentioned. Carlos had told me earlier that Calixto Muni was an 18th century Yaqui leader who had organized the Yaquis into a military unit to fight the Mexicans, Juan Bandera, who claimed to have had a vision of the Virgin of Guadalupe, also organized military units of Yaquis under a flag of the virgin. Tetabiate, after Cajeme's defeat, reorganized the remnants of the Yaqui forces in the mountains north of the Yaqui river, and waged guerrilla warfare against Mexicans for many years.

I sensed don Felipe didn't want to sell Carlos any masks, but when Carlos said that he was working with don Juan, whom don Felipe seemed to know, he got up and went into the back room and brought out a masks wrapped in a red cloth. He carefully unfolded the cloth to reveal a mask unlike the ones that we had found in the store. This mask was really spooky. It was unpainted and had no horsehair trim. The facial features were distorted as if in a snarl. The mouth was open, the eyes were slightly slanted, one higher than the other. The wood was white with layers of natural swirls in it's grain. It was beautiful, yet at the same time, awesome.

Carlos thanked don Felipe and we left.

"Why is that mask so different?" I asked, walking to the car.

"That's a mask of an *ally*," Carlos said. "The other masks are for the Pascola dancers."

Carlos carefully put the mask in the trunk after wrapping it in a towel for protection.

"What's an *ally*?" I asked, trying to think if Clara or John Michael Abelar had ever discussed that topic.

“An *ally* is a force that exists outside the world of ordinary perception,” Carlos said. “That force can take any shape when in service of the sorcerer.”

“You mean anything can be an *ally*?” I asked.

“No, they are specific entities that are formless, but they can take the shape of anything they wish to emulate, depending on the energy that they harness from the human world.”

“Have you ever seen one?” I asked.

“Don Juan showed me his *ally* on several occasions and nearly frightened me to death. Once I had to wrestle with it and thought I was done for.”

“Is it like a ball of energy? Sizzling and kind of bluish?”

“It could be a man, a gigantic black door, a ferocious animal, anything, but, yes, it's full of sizzling energy.”

I told Carlos about a series of recurring dreams I had had, of at least I thought they were dreams. I was staying in Clara’s house in the beautiful room she had assigned to me. I would just be drifting off to sleep, when I heard noises outside my door in the hallway. At first, I thought it was footsteps, someone big walking down the corridor. Terrified, I put my head under the covers and hoped the noises would go away.

But they didn’t. Sometimes there was some scratching at the door, as if a huge animal was prowling outside trying to get in. In my semi-sleep state, I would get up and push a heavy dresser in front of the door so that nothing could get in, but to no avail. The force, or whatever was behind the door, would be so fearsome strong, that the dresser would move aside, pushed by a sizzling energy, I’d just stand there petrified watching the antique dresser moving away from the door, and seeing the door itself bulging inward toward me with a tremendous force, about to bust off his hinges.

I would either run back to my bed and hide, preferably under it, or I would stand there so petrified that I was unable to move. I remembered trying to scream, but nothing came out of my mouth. Sometimes I would wake up panting, soaked in perspiration, or, I would wake up on the floor in front of the door, partly covered by the dresser. My heart would be pounding so strongly, that it would take hours to quiet down.

These encounters became so recurring that I told Clara about them.

“That force is nothing to sneeze at,” she said seriously. “You say the door is about to burst off it's hinges. Watch out! Whatever is prowling out there is about to come in.”

“What will happen if it does?” I asked. “Will I die?”

“Who can tell?” she said. “That force is determined to get you.”

“Why is it after me?” I asked. “What did I do wrong?”

In my mind, I ran the gamut of all the sins of commission and omission, and there were plenty of them.

“It’s not what you didn’t do,” she said shaking her head pathetically. “It’s what you did do. You’ve been doing your *sorcery passes*, especially, the one where you grab the imaginary sliding door and pull it open. That’s the one that started this whole thing, and that’s the one that may save you in a pinch.”

“What kind of pinch are you talking about, Clara. Will the force really come after me?”

“You bet your boots. I’d say it’s about to burst through the door any moment now, and when it does, you’re going to have to put up a fight.”

I felt my stomach sink right there. “I’d rather flee than fight,” I said. “I’m a coward. I only pretend to be tough, and sometimes I don’t even pretend well.”

Clara looked me up and down groggily and shook her head. “You only say you’re a coward, out of habit,” she remarked. “You’re tougher than you let on.”

“Let me be the judge of that, Clara," I insisted. “And I say when it comes to nightmarish forces, I’m a coward.”

She laughed and sighed resigned. “Have it your way, Taisha, it really doesn’t matter what you are. The thing that counts is what you do when the force comes through that door.”

“What should I do?” I asked.

“You grab it like this, and shake it like a huge Turkish towel.”

She demonstrated by holding up her two fists as if she were grabbing something in mid-air and began flinging her arms up and down wildly, thrashing about as if she were holding something invisible that was unstoppable in it's fury.

“Keep hold of it,” she warned. “Don’t you dare let go, no matter how hard it thrashes you about.”

Right there I knew I was lost, but my rational mind needed to know the very worst that could happen, so I asked, “What will happen if I let go?”

She stopped her bizarre gyrations and looked me in the eye. Her expression was cold and ominous. “The *ally* will gobble you up,” she said. “It likes tender little cowards,” and then she made the most ominous biting noises with her teeth, as she said, “Yum, Yum, yummy, yumm, yum,” over and over.

As Clara went on with her yummy, yum, yums she rubbed her stomach and patted her head at the same time in opposite circles. Then I knew that one of us had lost their mind, and I wondered if it wasn’t me.

I had decided then and there to disregard her advice as bordering on the absurd, and, to my relief, I didn’t have the encounter again the rest of that week, but the following week, right before my menstrual period, I felt the force again. This time, it was prowling outside my door with an increased ferocity. As I stood in front of the door, I could tell it meant business by the fierce white light that was bursting under the door and through the cracks on the sides, cracks that were getting larger as the sturdy door was being pushed away from it's hinges.

I didn’t even have time to run to my bed. The door burst aside, or rather was snapped off, and flung to the side, and I was face to face with a most blinding white light that was the size of the door frame. I was petrified, frozen to the core. I couldn’t scream or breathe. As it began advancing toward me, I was about to faint. Then, I realized that this sizzling glob of light was absolutely conscious and aware. Before I passed out, I heard in my ear Clara's voice saying yummy yum yum, over and over.

I had a moment of decision, of either getting rolled over by the boulder of light, or of grabbing it and shaking it like Clara had shown me. Some force inside me rallied, and in spite of myself, I instinctively lurched forward, diving into the ball of light head on like one would dive into a huge wave in the sea. I knew I would be electrocuted, fried to a crisp as when throwing a hairdryer into the bath tub; but to my amazement, the electricity was not hot at all. The

sizzling was cool, yet tremendously forceful.

I grabbed onto it, and hung on with all my might as it thrashed me about, first from side to side as it tried to shake me off, then in circles, as we roiled on the floor. I felt as if I were tumbled by a wave on the ocean bottom. It's force was so strong, that I lost consciousness, but something in me kept on grabbing.

Then, gradually, the force seemed to diminish. It became stiffer, rigid, then, more flaccid, having lost much of it's sizzling quality. It became flat and spongy, then, almost vaporous, until it evaporated altogether and I was left on the floor holding onto nothing.

I took a deep breath and perspiring, walked to my bed. All I could think of was, “what the hell was that?” When I woke up the next morning, I told Clara what had happened. She no longer seemed interested.

“Now, they won’t bother you again,” was all she said. “You’d be surprised how word gets around on the energetic plane. Forces know that they have another thing coming if they mess with Taisha.”

“What forces are those?” I asked Clara.

She said it was just a force that permeated the universe, bundles of energy, aware and predatory, like everything else in existence.

Remembering the encounter gave me the shivers. I moved closer to Carlos in the front seat, so my arm touched his. We drove back to Vicam Station in complete silence.

Chapter 10: Pascola Dances

We met Benny in the store at Vicam station where we were buying bread and fruit for our lunch. He said that if we hurried we could get to Potam in time to see the Pascola dances that were apart of the celebrations honoring the Holy Trinity, the patron of the church. On the way I asked Benny to tell me about the festivities. He explained that they included dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, colorful processions, and a fireworks display after dark.

“And of course plenty of food and drinking,” he added with a grin.

Under Benny's expert guidance, we made it to Potam in record time. The streets were so crowded, that we had a hard time maneuvering the car through the throngs of spectators. Yaquis and Mexicans from all over Sonora had gathered for the celebrations that were taking place in the plaza in front of the church. Two ramadas had been set up, on the east and west sides of the plaza, manned by two groups of four festival managers, or fiesteros.

"The four wearing red headdresses, carrying the red flags manage the western ramada," Benny said. "The ones on the eastern ramada have on blue headdresses and carry blue flags."

I craned my neck to see the different managers milling about the ramadas.

"Why do they have on different colored costumes?" I asked.

"The 'blues' are the Christians," Benny explained. "The red ones are the Moors."

"I didn't know there were Moors in Sonora," I said surprised.

Carlos gave me a nudge, "They are not really Moors," he said impatiently. "They are only playing the part of the Moors. You see, the fiesta is a dramatization of the fifteenth century conflict between the Christians and the Moors in Spain."

How that European struggle had woven itself into the ceremonies of a small Yaqui village was beyond my knowledge of history. I noticed that the red fiesteros or moros were wearing a small cone shaped hat made of wood about four inches high. On top of it was inserted a metal crescent from which hung a red cloth that covered their heads and most of the moro's face.

"We have to keep our eyes on the blue ones," Carlos said, pointing in the opposite direction. "The Christians are at the East side."

"Why do we have to watch the Christians?" I asked, intrigued by what the Moors were doing.

"Because it is at the eastern ramada where the Pascola and deer dances will take place," he explained.

I stood on my toes to see the men dressed in blue head gear. I noticed that they were wearing blue ribbons tied around their heads; the cloth completely covering their hair and the upper portion of their shoulders. They, too, were carrying wooden sticks, but instead of a crescent, they had a metal cross on the tip.

I couldn't see well, so we moved through an opening in the crowd to a place near the church steps. From there we had a bird's eye view of the east or Christian end of the plaza where the dancing would take place. The musicians had already begun to warm up their violins, harps, reed whistles and drums. Then the dancers came out, dressed in apron-like loin cloths, fringed vests, leggings and masks.

"What is the meaning of the Pascola dances and of the masks?" I asked standing on a low wall to get a better view. "Is there a religious significance to the dances?"

"There is," Carlos said, "The Yaquis believe that baptism already existed before the coming of the Spaniards. Those who did not wish to be baptized became enchanted. They had the power to transcend death, and existed on an invisible plane superimposed on the Yaqui tribal territory. The Yaqui believe that there is another world which is always there, just as this world surrounds us."

"Are the invisible people ghosts or phantoms?"

"They are not dead," Carlos explained, "The Yaquis called them the people of the Monte. They believe that the unbaptized ones or invisible ones are the source of the dances and music played for the pascola."

"There are stories of caves in the hills where men have encountered the invisible people and have learned to play the music for the pascola dances directly from them," Benny interjected.

"What about the dances themselves?" I asked. "Who taught them the movements?"

"The people of the Monte," said Benny. "They, too, are learned with the help of the invisible people. Sometimes one can hear pascola music in the bush where there are no people, and the Yaqui know that it is the people of the Monte playing. Personally, I think it's the wind, but then, I'm not a Yaqui."

I watched the east end where the dancing had begun. The dancers were making the most bizarre movements, as if they had no control over the musculature of their arms and legs, and the sounds that came out of their mouths were animalistic growls and shrieks unlike any human sounds I had ever heard.

"They look weird," I whispered to Carlos. "And they sound even weirder."

"That's because they are giving the deliberate impression that they are coming from the spirit

world. The reason they wear masks and make those unintelligible sounds, is because they haven't yet learned to speak the language of men, or move their arms and legs as is proper to human beings. The dancers must be introduced gradually into the world of men."

As we moved closer to the eastern ramada, Benny explained and Carlos translated other aspects of Yaqui tradition. I learned that the dancers are believed to have a direct connection with the animals of the Monte, whom they regard as their guardians and teachers. The entire dance is a dramatization of the passage from one world, the invisible realm of timeless existence, into the world of temporal and spacial limits inhabited by man, and then they moved back into the timeless with the help of the animals that the masks represented.

As I watched the dancers in their costumes, I notice that on their calves and ankles they wore bands onto which were sewn hundreds of cocoons that rattled whenever they took a step. They danced in a circle, moving their arms and legs rhythmically to the musicians' tunes. After a while they seemed to lose their strangeness and moved smoothly in synchronization with the music. Then they advanced to the center of the square, then turned separating to face the four directions, all the while thumping their feet so that the cocoon rattles made dry rasping sounds. They mingled with the music of the violins, drums and flutes, so that together they produced a hypnotic mixture of mesmeric reverberation.

After a while, another dancer came out to joint the group of pascola dancers. Benny said he was the deer dancer, which was denoted by the fact that he was wearing a deer's head as part of his costume. He symbolized the magical deer that inhabited the Monte, the realm that existed before time began. Accompanying the deer dancer, was a group of singers, singing special songs.

"Eees. The deer songs are very poetic," Benny said.

"What are they about?" I asked.

"They are songs of things that happened long ago, but it is not necessary to believe that they really happened, or that they are true, to appreciate their beauty. The Yaqui take pride in the telling of these stories."

I watched as the deer dancer moved his taut body. He seemed to have great endurance. His head was bowed as if in a trance, induced by the rhythmic shakes of the giant gourd rattles he held in each hand. He no longer seemed aware of the world around him, as if his own repetitive movements had carried him into another realm.

I noticed that the monotonous sounds were also having a deleterious affect on me. I seemed to have entered a mild stupor brought on by the repetitive sound of the instruments and by the rhythmic thumping of the dancer's feet that made the cluster of cocoons on his ankles rattle. At one point, it seemed as if I were viewing the dancer's world superimposed on the reality that was in front of me.

The more I focused my attention on the dancer wearing the deer mask, the more my own head began to sway. I heard a voice inside me telling me to keep my eyes on the dancer. His movements seemed particularly smooth as if he were propelled by an outside force; as if his body was no longer made of flesh and bone. He was fluid, empty, merging with the world of the invisible people and the spirit animals. Perhaps, what the Yaqui believed was true; and that dancing and wearing masks allows one to transcend one's humanness, slip outside the grip of time, and momentarily perceive from a different perspective.

Like the sorcerers who had trained me, a consummate dancer can grasp knowledge and *see* things beyond the limitations of his human form. Perhaps, for a moment, through the union with the dance and the sound of the reed whistle, drums, and rattling of a thousand dry cocoons, he is able to become what he was before the analytic mind began to dominate man. It is a way of regaining his heritage and once again, becoming one with the invisible people of the timeless plane.

As I watched the dancers thumping the ground with their legs, and moving in a semi circle, I realized how incomprehensible the world of the Yaqui Indian was to an outsider. Unless a person became a Pascola dancer, steeped in Yaqui ways, one could not really appreciate the events that were taking place, and to be a dancer one had to be a member of the Yaqui culture, and even then, it would take years of training with a master teacher, to perfect the art. Unless, one learned directly from one of the invisible people or animals of the Monte.

It was clear to me that an external description, such as those presented by anthropologists, would not adequately depict what went on inside the Yaqui deer dancer's head. An anthropologist, as an observer, could only describe what he saw from his external vantage point; for example, the costumes, the dances steps, or the stories that were told by the singers about Yaqui history. The anthropologist would analyze the Yaqui myths, record their music and eventually file them away in the ethnomusicological archives as part of a dying tradition.

Or he might examined the Yaqui social structure to see how people were organized in terms of the status and roles or their kinship relationships. Or he might dwell on the prescribed or proscribed behaviors that the members need to fulfill. He could discuss the tasks each person had to accomplish in order for the festivities to run smoothly. For example, what were the

duties of the blue and red fiesteros. Or he might examine the function the festivities and dances had in serving the community or their importance in strengthening social solidarity.

It was obvious that the celebrations gave the people a strong sense of communal cohesion. Hundreds had gathered with their families and relatives from neighboring towns to watch the dances, and to wait tor food to be served and the drinking to begin. An anthropologist would undoubtedly report that the festivities offer it's participants and spectators a chance to escape the mundane drudgery of everyday life. Through ritual expression, it takes the collective mind out of the realm of the profane and elevates it to the level of the sacred, reviving the ever-present myths of the past. As the dancers tell stories with their masks and movements, people could relive the events of Yaqui history, thereby, giving flesh and substance to happenings that may or may not have occurred in actual time.

As the gamut of anthropological explanations of the festivities ran through my mind, it was evident that in order to understand something, it was not enough to see things from an objective viewpoint, describing things in order that other researchers could replicate what one heard and saw. In order to understand the phenomenon one needed to become a member of that society or group. What was it like, I wondered, to be behind the mask of the dancer, to create the festival, not as an outsider, but as a member of the group, and see the world as the deer dancer himself saw it. In other words, one had to bite into an apple to taste or experience it's essence, not merely describe it's properties from the outside.

Yet the reverse was also true. A Yaqui Indian, without having attended a university, would find it impossible to understand the concepts and theories of the discipline of Anthropology. For a person who could not read or write, the rules of academic life would be incomprehensible. The masked dancer could never become a professor of anthropology, unless he went through the ranks and worked his way up the scholastic ladder. For that, he would have to begin at an early age to learn the ramifications of academic life. It would take years of specialized training, just as it would to become a pascola dancer.

When the dances were over, the dancers mingled with the crowds, to entertain the children as was part of their duties. Parents had hoisted their children onto their shoulders, so they could see the clowning and cavorting that was taking place. I noticed the child in front of me, riding on his father’s back. For an instant, I had the certainty that I, too, had ridden on someone’s back, and not as a child. Yet for the life of me I could not remember when it had been.

Then, as I watched the child, looking over his father’s shoulder, a total recollection struck me, as if blown on the nagging breeze that kept ruffling the back of my neck, I saw myself hanging from the harness in the giant tree in front of Clara’s house. Someone was standing at the foot

of the tree, grabbing my legs and swinging me back and forth. I didn't get nauseous or dizzy. On the contrary, I was yelling gleefully, to be pushed again, for the sensation of swinging was sheer delight to me.

I looked down and saw Carlos pushing me. He asked if I wanted to ride on his shoulders. I said I was too heavy, but he said the harness would support most of my weight. I lowered myself down onto his shoulders and held onto his head. He hooked his arms around my legs and off we went in small circles. We were laughing so hard that I didn't even notice that the harness had gotten tangled. When he let go, I was spinning like a top that had been wound up.

I shook my head to dispel the memory. It couldn't have happened, I thought; it was something I was just imagining. Yet the vision and feeling of having known Carlos before was so strong and delineated that I had trouble dispelling it. I took hold of his arm, so as not to get separated as we moved through the crowd on our way back to the car.

Benny had wanted to stay for the dancing and fireworks, but Carlos said he needed to make another stop to collect some masks and perhaps a set of cocoon rattles for the museum. We left Benny in the company of some of his friends, and drove back to Vicam Station, but before reaching the town, Carlos suddenly veered off the main highway onto an obscure road as if he knew exactly where he was going.

After several miles of a bumpy ride, he parked the car on a well packed area of ground near an adobe house almost completely hidden by shrubs. As we got out, he said casually, that we were not there to look at masks, but that it was don Juan's house and he had wanted to see if he was home. Carlos called out announcing our presence, but no one came to the door. I waited in the car while Carlos walked down the road to see if he could catch don Juan returning from the store. Carlos said he had a strong feeling that he would encounter him on the road the way he had done on the previous occasions he had come to visit him.

For a while I waited in the car, then I grew restless and decided to sit on a bench that was near the house. I wanted to sketch the fences and the Sonoran house construction, to complement the sketches I had made earlier of the desert chaparral. I brought a bottle of mineral water with me from the car and made myself comfortable on the roughly hewn bench.

After a few minutes, a wiry man in his early fifties came out of the house and stretched as if he had been asleep. I greeted him and tried to explain in Spanish, who I was and why I was sitting under his ramada.

"I already know who you are," he said in English.

He had on a sombrero and as he introduced himself as Juan Matus, he removed it from his head and made a slight bow in the manner of a gentleman. When he raised up again, I could see his face. I felt my stomach sink and my mouth fall open as I registered a moment of sheer confusion. It was John Michael Abelar. I could barely recognize him, but it was unmistakably he. He had that same strength and vibrancy, and the same shiny eyes that could change in an instant from calmness to ferocity.

“Mr. Abelar! What are you doing dressed up as a Yaqui Indian? I almost didn’t recognize you.”

“When in Rome, do as the Romans do,” he said with a laugh. “In these parts I’m known as Juan Matus, but you can call me what ever you wish.”

After the initial shock of seeing him had subsided, I was surprised at how easy it was to be in his company. The energy he imparted to the encounter made my inherent stiffness vanish. I knew I ought to have been terrified of him, but somehow I wasn’t. He exuded a sense of reasonableness and fairness that gave the impression that in all his dealings, he was impeccable. In fact, I was so at ease with him that I wanted to regard him as a familiar relative.

“Just don’t call me grandpa,” he teased, reading my thoughts.

“I’ll call you don Juan, like Carlos does,” I said. “As you said, when in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

He nodded. I noticed that on his porch were a set of cocoon rattles like the ones the Pascola dancers had used, and also, several masks similar to the ones Carlos had bought at the neighboring stores.

“Seeing those cocoon rattles, I thought that a pascola dancer lived here,” I said. “Do you go around masquerading as one?”

Don Juan laughed. “I learned a few of the Yaqui dance steps in my youth,” he admitted. “I lived many years in Pascua, a Yaqui town in Arizona.”

“What kind of dances did you do?” I asked him.

“The deer dance was my specialty,” he said walking over to where I was sitting. He glanced at my notebook in which I had already begun sketching part of the ramada and some of the masks.

“Can you tell me about the deer dance?” I asked covering my drawings with my forearm. I didn’t tell him about the dances I had just seen in Potam.

“Do you want a demonstration?” he offered.

For a moment I hesitated wondering if I shouldn’t wait for Carlos to return.

“Carlos won’t be back for quite a while,” don Juan informed me. “Right now he’s on his way to Ciudad Obregon on some business.”

“What kind of business?” I asked, alarmed. “Besides his car is here, how is he going to get there?”

“Someone is driving him in her car,” he said with an emphasis on the “her.” He peered at me as if to assess my reaction.

I registered a moment of uneasiness. “You mean he’s looking for more masks? And what about me? What am I supposed to do, wait in the car until he comes back?”

“You’re not the only business he has, young lady,” don Juan said sternly. “Right now he’s occupied elsewhere. He left you here in my care.”

“But when is he coining back?”

“Not tonight,” he said tersely. He gave me a look that left no room for any more questions or commentary.

“You’ve always been interested in movements and in martial arts,” he reminded me. “Yaqui dances are quite different from Oriental movements.”

Don Juan stooped over and began to put on the cocoon rattles that he had removed from a peg. Up close, I could see they were made from hundreds of dried moth larvae sewn onto a wide leather strap which he tied around his calves. Then he reached for a mask of a deer’s head, like the one the deer dancer in Potam had worn. Part of it was made out of a real deer’s head with ears and a pointed snout and antlers.

Don Juan was ready to demonstrate the deer dance. Eagerly, I picked up my pad and pencil to jot down notes. Benny had explained that the masked dancers communicated with the realm

of the invisible ones through their movements, but I still did not know how it was done or what the dance steps signified.

Don Juan began smoothly sliding his sandalled feet over the dirt floor under the ramada, seemingly brushing the ground with deer hoofs. His back was slightly arched and his head was looking down. With ankles and knees bent, his movements took on a sleek, graceful appearance as if he were identifying with the animal the mask represented. His body became more limber, his movements light yet forceful. He twisted his waist and torso back and forth, swaying his arms rhythmically behind him to the dry rattling sound of the cocoons. Then a series of raspy yet muffled shakes followed as he repeatedly thumped down on the ground, alternating his feet.

He began to chant in a monotonous tone in a language I could not understand. The thumping and rattling continued until my eyelids grew heavy. I thought it must be the heat or all the excitement of the day that was making me tired and I tried hard to keep my eyes open, but soon my head began bobbing up and down just like don Juan's, until I could no longer stay awake. The last thing I remember was my note pad slipping out of my lap onto the ground, but I did not have the volition to pick it up.

I was watching a purple circle of light in front of my eyes opening until I no longer saw a man masquerading as a deer, gyrating to the sound of chanting and cocoon rattles. I was seeing a forest, and standing in front of me gazing back through the opening of the purple eye, was a magnificent deer. The hollow rattling faded into the distance and mingled with the wind rustling the branches of the pines, the leaves on the ground, and with the rushing of a nearby stream.

Mesmerized, I watched the deer gazing back at me. I knew what it was thinking. It's words, for this dream deer cold talk, came to me on the rustling sounds of the ground leaves. More wordless sounds spilled out of it's mouth like a fountain of bubbles that floated toward me. Instantly, I and the deer became friends, for it too, could comprehend my thoughts.

"Don't be surprised that you can understand me," said the deer without moving it's mouth. Although he spoke without words, that was the meaning his eyes were expressing. "If you let go of your limiting ideas of what is real and unreal, all sorts of things can happen. Deer can talk too, and have feelings."

I thought, "am I dreaming? What happened to the desert? How did I come to this forgotten forest?" No sooner had I thought these things, when the deer told me that the forest exists in another realm, the realm of myth, and one enters that realm by letting go of the world in which

one lives.

“But how did this happen?”I wondered. “Did I just fall asleep?”

“The shaman’s rattles helped transport you,” explained the deer, it’s liquid eyes shimmering in the mellow afternoon light. “His rhythmic sounds put you to sleep and made you wake in this enchanted realm. I am your friend, your guardian animal. If you have any questions about things just find me and I will tell you the answers. Now is there anything in particular you would like to know?”

Instinctively I looked for my notepad. I wanted to write everything down the deer said, so that when I awoke, I would have proof that I had really been where I seemed I was. I wanted to ask the deer all sorts of questions, details about the forest and the nature of the world I was in, but the more I tried to think, the less I could formulate my thoughts.

“What is the meaning of life?” I blurted out.

The deer looked at me for an instant and then began to laugh, and as he laughed a million bubbles came out of it's mouth until a golden fog rose up around me, completely opaquing the forest and the deer itself. All I heard was the rushing stream and it was that sound that brought me back to the desert hut, and to the masked deer dancer who was standing over my slumped body staring at me. Slowly, I remembered who and where I was and marveled at the sorcery by which don Juan had transported me into the dream realm. I wanted to ask if he had also seen the deer, or if he had actually become the deer himself, but it took too much effort to speak.

Don Juan took off his mask and scrutinized, me from head to foot. He knew that I had seen a vision. I wanted to ask him how it was done, how the purple eye had opened right in front of me, but he motioned for me to remain silent. He gave his cocoon rattles a few more shakes as he stepped away from me, then he stooped over and untied the rattles from his ankles.

“The cocoons are made of dried moth larvae,” he explained, holding them up for me to see. “When so many are gathered together, they have the power to break barriers and to transport. The mask of the deer calls the guardian spirit to come to the window of this world. Then it’s easy to slip though. You had a short journey, but now you know it can be done, and you can go into the world of *dreaming* again whenever you want.”

I stared at don Juan, only half believing him. The thought occurred to me that he had put some powdered herbs into the water I had been drinking when he stooped over to look at my

drawing, and that that was what had affected me. I glanced at the bottle on the mud brick ledge.

“It was the deer mask and the cocoon rattles,” he assured me. “Nothing in your drink. If the dance and dancer have power, together they can transport one to the other side.”

Don Juan hung the rattles on a nail on the ramada post. He carefully wrapped the deer mask in a piece of cloth then excused himself and went inside the house to put it away.

The twilight spilled over the ground casting liquid shadows everywhere. For a long time I sat staring at the notebook on the ground, waiting for don Juan to come back so I could ask him more questions, but when he didn’t come out, I finally got up enough energy to go inside the house to look for him, but don Juan wasn’t there. He seemed to have vanished, perhaps though that illusive crack into the world of *dreaming*.

Chapter 11: Cleansing Angelica

It was too windy to sit under the ramada in the dusk, and too spooky to wait inside don Juan’s house, so I decided to sit in the car until Carlos or don Juan returned. I was absorbed in writing up my notes when I heard a knocking on the windshield. I nearly jumped through the car roof. Don Juan was staring through the glass motioning me to roll down the window.

“Let’s go for a walk,” he said when I got out of the car. He was carrying a bundle tied to his back like a knapsack.

“But won’t it be dark soon?” I said.

“So much the better,” he replied.

Obediently, I put on my poncho and sombrero and followed him into the chaparral. According to my compass, which I always carried with me, we were heading in a westerly direction. As I trudged behind him, I noticed his hands. The tips of his middle and ring fingers were curled and pressed against the palms, while the thumbs, index, and pinky fingers were extended in a natural position.

“Keep your fingers like this and you won’t tire yourself,” he said holding up his hand for me to see, “and positioning your gaze just above the horizon helps to quiet your thoughts. If you

succeed, you will have more energy while walking."

"Where are we going?" I asked trying to copy his hand position.

"To a place of power," he said picking up his pace.

Even though I kept my gaze just above the horizon as don Juan had recommended, I could not quiet my thoughts. I was lining up in my mind all the questions I had been unable to ask him earlier. Now they were bursting to get out.

"Was it really the power of the mask and dance movements that cause me to have that vision of the deer?" I blurted out.

"The rattling of the cocoons was the line that took you into the dream world and the link that brought you back," don Juan said. "But the dancer himself can move someone with his intent."

"What do you mean by intent?" I asked.

"I mean that the energy coming out of the dancer can impinge on the energy of the observer, and can change the world around him. You, being liquid, were easily moved."

"But is there really another world one can enter? Do you believe the Yaqui myth of the realm of the Monte populated by invisible people? And what about the spirit animals, do they exist?"

He stopped to peer at me for an instant. "After what you've seen, how can you ask those questions?"

"I just want your opinion," I said defensively.

"The Yaqui Indians call it the realm of the Monte, but I call it the *world of dreaming*," he said. "Women are better at slipping into this realm than men because they are less rigid in their expectations and beliefs. Now, no more questions. Let's walk in silence."

The distant hills were already bathed in shades of dark purple, and the sky was what my art teachers had always called a perfect watercolor sky; with billowing clouds in different shades of gray, red, and pink. We came towards a clump of green shrubbery and a long row of cottonwood trees. When we were closer, I could see that the upper branches of the trees had been cut off, as if they had been harvested or someone had done a poor job of pruning. Still, it was one of the few areas in the terrain where there was lush vegetation.

“That’s the Yaqui river,” don Juan said, pointing to the clump of trees. “It cuts across the territory, bringing the only source of water to the land. That’s why places along it are *power spots*. Plants and animals flock to them, as well as spirits that seek moisture.”

We crossed over a low plank bridge, that seemed about to fall apart under our feet.

“It’s not very big,” I remarked, looking down. “And it’s practically dry. Somehow I expected a real river full of water.”

“After the rains, it fills up,” he assured me. “But it is never very wide.”

We climbed down the barranca to a creek on the other side; it was one of the areas where the earth was moist. Don Juan told me to be careful because the rocks were slippery. After walking down the creek for a stretch, we sat on a rock. Don Juan took off his knapsack, reached in and handed me a round Mexican bread and an orange, and some thin strips of dried meat. I was famished for I hadn’t eaten since lunch. We missed the food at the Holy Trinity festival, because as visitors, it would not be safe for us to eat from the street vendors.

I began to peel the orange and wiped my fingers on some dry leaves. From where we sat I could hear the trucks rumbling by on the highway stirring up clouds of dust and exhaust.

“Trucks in Mexico have names given to them by their owners which they paint above the bumper,” don Juan explained. “The one that just passed was called ‘Wounded Heart.’”

I wondered how he knew that, for there was no way he could have seen the truck from where we were sitting.

“I *see*,” he said casually.

“What does it mean to ‘*see*’, don Juan?”

“It means different things to different people. Sometimes, it’s having the certainty that a thing is so. Other times it’s a voice that tells you something specific, or it can be a visual sensation of *seeing energy fibers* or colors moving around a person, plant, animal or object. It can even be a longing that grips you, and doesn’t let you go.”

“I have a longing that doesn’t let me go,” I said. “But I don’t know what it is. I can never voice it. It comes from so far away.”

Don Juan looked at me for a moment then shook his head. “That’s not *seeing*, that’s called indulging.”

He let out a spurt of genuine laughter. I wanted to argue with him but he shook his head.

“I bet it has something to do with finding love,” he said giving me a nudge.

“I suppose you’re right,” I conceded, “but don’t sorcerers love or want to be loved?”

“They do, but not in the way ordinary people fall in and out of love. A sorcerer’s affection is peerless. He has no vested interest or personal attachment to his feeling. It is given without any strings attached, and once given, it is never ever retracted.”

The finality of his statements gave me a chill. It made any notion of love that I had ever come across seem paltry, inferior and soaked in emotional indulging.

“I don’t know if I could commit myself in such a final, absolute way,” I said, offering him half of the bread.

Don Juan laughed and said that it had nothing to do with personal choice or commitment. It was rather a question of fate, to which one either acquiesced and acted impeccably or resisted to one’s dying breath.

“The flow of fate bringing people together is rare and mysterious,” he said softly. “Only a blind fool or knowledge criminal would not acquiesce to such a gift.”

“What is a knowledge criminal?”

His eyes were glossy as if remembering something that happened long ago. “Someone who knows better but obstinately refuses to act upon his knowledge.” Then he laughed and said teasingly, “don’t worry, this is not a proposition from an old man.”

I laughed too but a bit more nervously than I had intended. Don Juan was far from being an old man.

Another truck drove by. I wondered where it was going. Perhaps to Mazatlan, or Guadalajara, or even as far south as Mexico City. I commented to don Juan that I had never been to any of these places.

“You’ll go there soon,” he said with such certainty that I was forced to ask: “how do you know? Are you *seeing* again?”

“Carlos will take you there,” he said. “Zuleica is in Guadalajara waiting for you. She has something to teach you.”

“Can’t I stay here with you?” I asked, feeling at ease in his company and afraid to death of what Zuleica had to teach me.

“No, your path is different. We are all bound to help you, but you are not like us. You have to return to Los Angeles. You have other things to do.”

“What will I have to do?” I asked alarmed.

“That is for the *spirit* to decide. It will tell you and your power will dictate what you are capable of.” He nudged me and said softly. “You are capable of more than you realize.”

Just then a gust of wind rustled the leaves of the cottonwood trees. I felt a chill that entered my very bones. The consequence of not being up to the *spirit’s* challenge was too divesting to formulate, so even thought I didn’t know what that challenge might be, I decided to seize it.

“Tell me more about the deer dancer, don Juan. Exactly how does the dancer enter into another realm?”

Don Juan took off his hat and wiped his forehead with a kerchief he had in his shirt pocket. “At first, entering the dream world may be a frightening experience; or it may only seem like a dream from which one doesn’t wake up, but for a sorcerer, that dream is real and if you go into that world often enough, it will become real for you too.”

“How can a sorcerers or Yaqui say the dream world is real?” I asked. “Can’t they tell the difference between the waking state and dreams?”

“For sorcerers it’s real because they can act in the dream state with certainty and control. They *stalk* their dreams; they can learn things, find things, understand things that are not clear in the everyday world.”

“What kind of things?”

“Things about the future, or what someone is doing miles away. It’s a way of seeing beyond what is in front of you.”

“Are you talking about divination, don Juan?”

The Anthropological literature was full of references of how, in “primitive” cultures, the shaman enters a trance to see what the future holds, to diagnose illness, or to seek out the proper treatment. African witch-doctors were particularity fond of using smoke and charred bones or the liver of chickens to make forecasts. Magic, sorcery, divination, witchcraft, all these areas were a part of the Anthropological tradition; yet they always had seemed so far removed from our actual day to day activities, our personal lives. To the Yaqui, such activities did not seem strange at all. Don Juan, himself, had used his dancing to open the door to the world of the spirits, to a different reality. A world that was for a sorcerer as real and predictable as the everyday world was for us.

“The magical realm of the Yaqui isn’t extraordinary at all,” don Juan said. “It’s not a part of the supernatural or an aspect of the sacred and profane dichotomy anthropologists so readily set up.”

“How do you know about what anthropologists do?” I asked.

“Arizona is full of anthropologists,” he laughed. “Especially the tribal areas around Tucson. Someone is always trying to get a poor sucker to answer a questionnaire for a few dollars. They go around making categorization schemes without ever knowing what they are talking about.”

“My sentiments exactly,” I said. “But I tried telling that to one of my professors once and he accused me of not being professional material, and proceeded to kick me out of his office.”

“You have to learn to *stalk* your professors,” don Juan recommended, “Or they’ll gobble you up for breakfast. Those professors feast on young co-eds.”

“How do I *stalk* them?” I asked.

“Treat the University as a hunting ground. If you go there to be discovered, or to be liked, or to make a statement, you’ll fall flat on your face. If they sense you are challenging them, the *petty tyrants* will put up a fight and they almost always win.”

“How can I overcome them?” I asked. “They are men, they are petty, and they hold the power.”

“You walk around them on cat feet, and never let them know your opinions or what you are thinking. A consummate *stalker* has no opinions. He or she adapts to any circumstance, swiftly and smoothly like wind. If they think they have you cornered, you are already somewhere else. Be elusive and beyond containment, but devastatingly powerful.”

“That sounds like a contradiction to me,” I said.

Just then another gust of wind ruffled the ground leaves. It blew a bunch right into my lap. Don Juan laughed and said I was going to make a superb *stalker*, provided that I treated everything as *controlled folly*, and make myself zero so no one would be able to grab hold of me.

“Besides, only someone who is as light as the wind can pass through the cracks between the worlds,” don Juan continued.

“What do you mean by the cracks between the worlds?” I asked.

“The sorcerers *see* that the world of the spirits exists and that there are entities other than human beings and animals that roam the earth,” don Juan said, “but they exist behind a wall that is full of cracks, so to speak. A sorcerer takes that knowledge for granted just as westerners take for granted the belief in God, heaven, the scientific method, or the Pope’s infallibility, or walking on the moon, or anything else that affects their everyday lives.”

“Are you saying that Neil Armstrong never walked on the moon? Or that he passed through some sort of cosmic crack to get there?”

“Not at all. Only that it takes a tremendous effort for man to bring into his awareness the end result that of a man walking in outer space. Or that a man in Rome is the direct representative of God on earth, or that a Virgin conceived a son. In the light of these feats of *intending*, the knowledge that other entities coexist with man on earth does not take such a great leap of faith.”

I looked around. I had never regarded spirits as part of my daily world, but as a child I did see shadows coming alive, and had at times, felt the presence of a guardian angle. I had also assumed saints, fairies, elves and leprechauns existed, even though I had never seen one. So it was not so difficult to accept that the Yaqui Indians, too, had spirit entities, like the spirit deer I had encountered, who protect and advise them as do our supernatural helpers.

“If the Yaqui say there is a spirit world and that they learn in dreams, a person would have to

experience this kind of learning to know what they are talking about," I told don Juan. "If the Yaqui address themselves to a mythological realm and treat it as reality, in order to understand it, the anthropologist must do the same. He must make their myths his reality,"

I told don Juan that it is the Anthropologist's task to describe, to the best of his ability, what goes on in another culture, in another reality, the way members of that culture see and live it. Therefore, he has to be as open and accessible to phenomena that he encounters, no matter how strange they might be; no matter how different from his own expectations or experiences. In short, the field worker must suspend judgment while he is doing research. Only in this way might he go beyond his limited way of thinking, his ethnocentrism; and his perceptual bias. Furthermore, by seeing another reality, one's own taken-for-granted reality would lose it's ultimate importance.

"Women make the best sorcerers," don Juan said after listening to my discourse, "and no doubt the best anthropologists too."

"Why is that?"

"Because they are much more sensitive than men. They can experience and accept things beyond their range more readily without the insistence on reasserting themselves the way men do. On the other hand, women are much more vulnerable and must be cushioned from the shock of encountering other realities. They tend to indulge and lose their underpinnings at the drop of a hat."

I laughed because for a moment I thought he had said women lose their "underpants" at a drop of a hat.

"That too," don Juan said laughing, "but unfortunately there is never a shortage of men to support them in that department!"

In a more serious note he added that if a woman was sober, courageous, and adventuresome, and didn't lose her underpants, she could uncover mysteries beyond her wildest expectations.

"But doesn't she have to have spirit helpers?" I asked.

"It's true, some spirits are helpers," don Juan continued. "Every person, upon birth, receives a totem animal that protects and advises him throughout his lifetime. Perhaps, yours is the deer."

I liked deer. I was born in an area full of forests, and plenty of deer. I enjoyed being in the forest, being still, remaining hidden. I had to agree, I had something in common with deer by way of temperament.

“What is your totem animal?” I asked.

“The crow. I have always had an affinity with them, every since my teacher showed me how to become one.”

“I like birds too,” I said. “I often dream I’m flying.”

“Crows are excellent *stalkers*,” don Juan added, “and some of the Pascola masks depict them.”

I finished the orange and the rest of the dried meat.

“The dancer, if he has *power*, can actually can turn into the animal he portrays,” don Juan continued. “I’ve talked to and observed quite a number of Pascola dancers. For some, the dance is merely a means to show off, but for others the dance is a vehicle; the mask, the music and the mesmeric movement of the cocoon rattles usher the dancer into the spirit realm. There he can learn about the mysteries of the universe, and even find answers to life’s fundamental questions.”

Don Juan gave me a nudge and I knew he was referring to what I had asked the spirit deer. Or perhaps Carlos had told him about our meeting in the Anthropology department when I had asked him the same question.

“If you meet the deer in your dreams,” he advised me, “ask him about the meaning of life. He will tell you what you want to know.”

“Is that what you do, don Juan? Learn in your dreams?”

Don Juan nodded. “And through *seeing*. Right now I *see* that there is a patch of angelica growing over there. Exactly the plant we came all this way to find.”

We got up and walked toward the bend in the creek where don Juan had said the plants were growing.

“What are the plants for?” I asked.

“They are invaluable for female sorcerers,” he said. “It gives them sobriety, purpose and cushions them from the erratic perceptual changes that they are prone to, especially during their menstrual periods.”

Earlier as we walked he had stopped from time to time to allow me to examine certain plants at close range. He had cautioned me not to pick any of them but only to remember what they looked like, in case I ever needed to find them. There was Manzanilla, sage, and a small plant with blue flowers. He had said that we were not there to gather herbs, but to learn how to store *power*. He assured me that if I ever needed to heal myself, it would be though manipulating *energy* directly, not by ingesting any plant. There was one exception to this rule, and that was the angelica plant.

We walked up to some large yellow-green plants that looked like tall overgrown celery. They had shot up about a yard and at the tips were tufts of dried stalks with tiny brown seeds.

“This is Angelica,” he said taking off a bit of the leaf and rubbing it between his fingers.

“It smells like celery,” I said taking a sniff. “What does it taste like?”

“Find out for yourself,” he said and gave me a bit of the seeds to chew. They tasted like bitter celery.

“Do I make an infusion out of the leaves or seeds?” I asked.

“You can, or you chew on the seeds directly, but in your case it’s better to smoke it.”

“How do I smoke it?”

“You first dry the stalks and then crush a bit and put it in a pipe and lite a match to it."

“I’ve never smoked anything in my life,” I said.

“Not even marijuana?” he teased.

“A friend of mine gave me a joint once to try, but I didn’t like it. The smoke really hurt my lungs and made me sneeze. You see, I’m allergic to smoke.”

“This is not marijuana,” he said seriously. “Besides, you probably inhaled too much smoke into your lungs when you should have allowed the smoke to envelope you.”

“What does angelica smoke do?” I asked.

“It cleans the energy fibers of the body.”

He stepped back and gave me a groggy look, running his eyes up and down from head to toe. “There’s a great deal of debris clinging to your fibers in spite of your *recapitulation*,” he said. “So in stubborn cases like yourself, one has to use smoke to cleanse the *double*. You don’t have to inhale it. Just allow the smoke to caress you. It knows what to do. It will clean you without you having to direct it.”

Don Juan gathered some of the dry stalks and put them inside his knapsack. He said he would give them to me later. If I ran out, I would have to find the next batch myself.

“What if I can’t come back here?” I said.

“Angelica grows everywhere,” he replied, “You can find it in abundance in the canyons around Los Angeles. Then you have to let the stalks dry and find a pipe in your *dreaming* and put some crushed leaves inside. Or you can light the tip of the stalk directly.”

We sat down on a log and he asked me for a match. I pulled out a match book from my pocket, for along with the compass, I always carry a book of matches in my pockets so that I could gaze at it's flame whenever I needed to. I wondered how don Juan knew I had matches with me. He lit a dry stalk about three inches long by holding a match to it's tip. Then he moved the stalk back and forth in front of my nose and allowed the smoke to enveloped me. The smoke made me cough and my eyes burn and I didn’t like the sensation at all, but when the smoke cleared, I experienced a calmness and clarity that was unprecedented.

At first I couldn’t pin point exactly what the difference was, then I realized that my calmness resulted from the fact that my internal dialogue had completely stopped. I had no more thoughts, I was content to perceive directly, without filtering everything through words and thoughts. I felt that the ‘I’ that was always in command had vanished. Somehow the smoke had made things absolutely still so that there was no separation between the analytical “I” and the things it thought about.

Subtle as it was, it seemed like the difference between night and day. During the day everything is agitated, the streets are full of traffic and noise, the energy of people, and the tension and hurry of life, fills one’s being. At night, things quiet down. No one is going anywhere. The birds, too, have settled in their nests and all is at rest. That was the way I felt

after I had inhaled only a few puffs of smoke; completely at rest, with no hurry, no worries, everything had returned to it's natural place. The world was the way it should be, without the constant interference of thoughts and expectations.

It was an exquisite feeling of serenity that the smoke brought. It was like burning incense in a church. I began to breath deeply from my abdomen and relished the tranquility and ease of having nothing to say, nothing to do, and no place to go, except to be where I was at that precise moment in time. It was as if my being had blended with eternity extending in front of my eyes.

“The angelic smoke is like that,” don Juan said sensing my mood. “It expects nothing from you. It humbly does it's job of cleansing away the debris of the past. If you are emotionally upset or agitated, surround yourself with angelica smoke. No need to inhale it, and only use it when you feel agitated and need to calm yourself. Never abuse it. Together with the *recapitulation*, it will served as a means to cleanse and soothe the erratic bent of your nature.”

Don Juan reiterated that I didn’t need to use a pipe or to really inhale at all. I could just light a bit of the stalk, and let the smoke rise while holding the piece of angelica root in my left hand. The effect would be the same. The smell of the smoke, around me would be enough to clear my head and cause my internal dialogue to cease.

He made a small fire out of wood, then placed some branches of angelica that he had collected from the ground, on top of the tire. We sat in front of it for a while and from time to time he used his jacket to fan the smoke in my direction. When the fire had extinguished itself, he took a stick and pointed to the charged remains.

“Earlier you wanted to know about *seeing*,” he said. “The ancient sorcerers of our lineage, used many different methods to understand the state of things. They used corn kernels, the patterns in the clouds, the formation of leaves in the trees and on the ground, or after a fire had gone out, the placement of the charred wood.”

(add section from chapter on fire and divination) – From the Original scan

Chapter 12: Crow’s Dream

It was past midnight by the time we return to don Juan’s house. Carlos’s car was still parked where he had left it, so I knew he had not returned. I wanted to sleep in the car with the

windows rolled up and the doors locked, but don Juan would not hear of it.

“My house is at your disposal,” he said with an air of gallantry. “Please, make your self at home.”

He assured me that I would be perfectly safe, and he personally guaranteed that his house had no fleas because he kept no animals. He lit a kerosene lantern and set it on the table that was next to a cot. He handed me a folded wool blanket and said he needed to go to Torim to see some people. He stressed that he would not be back until the following day.

“What if someone comes snooping around here?” I said, ill at ease.

“No one will disturb you,” he assured me.

“How can you be so certain?”

”This house is well protected.”

“By what? An invisible alarm system?” I said with a laugh.

“You could call it that. I have a guardian that frightens off any unwanted visitors.”

At first I thought he was referring a guard dog, but before I could ask him who this guardian was, he said. “Shall I show it to you?”

“No, no, no. I’ll take your word for it,” I said, suddenly afraid. If I was to sleep there, I didn’t want any frightening details to play on my imagination.

“If you do see or hear something unusual, it’s best just to ignore it,” he said.

I nodded and took the blanket. When he left the room, I lay down on the cot that had a lumpy horsehair mattress. I tried to fall asleep, but sleep would not come. A part of me was wide awake, on the alert; the other part was desperately trying to fall asleep. Instead of feeling the hardness of the mattress beneath me, I felt as if I were suspended in a soft cotton batting that was warm and numbing. I attributed this odd sensation to the strange vibrations in the room that made all hardness dissolve. It was a liquid room, moving, changing shapes in the darkness. Or, perhaps, it was my blood or adrenaline surging through my body, or being in the *nagual’s* lair, but the buzzing became louder until my body seemed to disappear and all that was left of me was a dull, overall tingling.

The feeling was reminiscent of the first night I had spent in Clara's tree house. On that occasion, being off the ground had made my body expand, balloon outward, and I had been enveloped with the same sensation of floating with no self reference in terms of my physical size or shape. Emilito had later explained this sensation as my *double* coming out and taking over, because being in the tree house had inhibited the pull of gravity on my physical body.

I was remembering Emilito and the mysterious tree house, when I heard a snapping that sounded like a twig breaking, coming from a pile of baskets in the corner of the room. All my senses were on alert. The front of my body seemed totally open as if there were a huge gaping hole where my stomach and chest should have been. I strained to see in the darkness, but could see only the outlines of the paraphernalia in the room; a few gourds hanging from ropes, two Yaqui masks, one of a deer, another of a crow hooked to the post; the silhouette the kerosene lantern on the table.

I heard the noise again. The snapping might have been a giant cricket, except that the sound was too clipped, too brittle. It was more like the click of a metal dime-store toy in the shape of a frog or a mouse that snaps when the metal lever is depressed and released. Now the click was on the other side of the room; it seemed to have moved closer to the cot. I raised up a bit, leaning against the folded burlap bag that served as a pillow. I jumped when I heard the sound next to my head.

The click came again, this time by the door. It made the area in my midsection leap whenever it snapped. Whatever the sound was, it was definitely hopping about the room, as if trying to attract my attention. As I lay wide awake trying to anticipate from where the next click would be coming, I realized that the sorcerers' world was full of the unexpected. I decided to follow don Juan's advice and ignore what ever it was in the room. I must have fallen asleep, for I drifted into a dream that seemed totally real.

I was taking the crows mask off the wall and put in on my head. Don Juan was going to show me some movements. First he demonstrated how I should position my feet. Bending my knees, I had to raise up on the balls of my feet then thump down onto the heels repeatedly. I copied his action, raising my heels off the ground then sharply placing them down again. After a while, it became a single smooth performance involving my ankle and knee joints. I felt my legs become rubbery, viscous; my hands were hanging loosely at my sides. I imagined myself a wine maker trampling on a vat of grapes with my bare feet.

Then, following don Juan's lead, I arched the upper portion of my back as if I were lifted by some exterior force, and bringing my arms out to the sides of my body, I opened them up like

the wings of an enormous bird. My head was inclined forward and I was looking down, while raising my arms up and down in conjunction with my breathing. I flapped my arms again and again in a repetitive action.

After what seemed an eternity, the ground in front of me opened and I was no longer dreaming; I was standing waving my arms in simulated flight. I was actually in the air, soaring over a breathtaking view of the desert! I could see vegetation, irrigation ditches, roads, and the pitaya fences around the flat roofed adobe houses. As I soared in the air, I moved my arms so vigorously that I was growing tired. I heard don Juan say that I did not have to flap so hard; but that I could, if I wished, simply glide.

At his suggestion, I let go and experienced the most exquisite sensation of gliding through the air. I could feel the wind ruffle my sleek black feathers, and in the distance I could see the most beautiful snow capped mountains. I suspected they were the sacred mountains of the mythical Yaqui world, but they were as real as any formation in the waking world. They were breathtaking in their splendor; more beautiful than any landscape I had ever seen on this earth. I flew over the valley, soaring, then flapping my wings, only to glide again. Then I heard music drifting toward me from the distance. As the music filled my very being, I experienced a state of exquisite happiness. I heard don Juan say that I could land if I was tired. I looked down and saw a grove of tall trees and headed for the top branches.

“You can stop moving your arms now,” don Juan said. “The crow has safely landed.”

I perched on the branch and rested. I could feel my crow’s body, my beak and head, and my feathery wings. I was preening myself the way birds do, happy to be in the tree with the breeze rustling the leaves. When I had rested, I swooped down to a field, and began hopping on the ground. After a while, another crow, came and hopped alongside me. Then the strangest thing happened. The crow mounted me and we mated the way crows do. Not that I had the faintest notion of how crows mated. Yet I was certain I was experiencing the act the way crows did it. In fact, the other crow, in no time at all, had me in the position he wanted, and a pleasurable interchange followed. The realization that the other crow was don Juan made it all the more exhilarating.

In that dream, I saw and felt things that for the rational mind are incomprehensible, and although my rational mind was circumvented, my senses were keen and I experienced an outpouring of the most profound affection. It was that surge of emotion that created such a stirring in the depth of me that I would always remember the feeling of my crow’s body and what it is like to soar through the air lighter than wind.

After a while the field vanished and I found myself again standing in don Juan's house, flapping my arms in the stylized crow's flight. I felt something rough brushing my face, and I heard breathing that wasn't my own. I realized then that the blanket was rubbing my cheek and that it was I who was breathing heavily in my sleep. As the moment of dual awareness merged, I awoke and found myself lying on the cot. I remembered every detail of the dream, and I closed my eyes to recapture the feeling of the wind rushing against me and to bring back the glorious mountain range surrounding that rapturous valley.

For a long time, I lay awake in the darkness, half listening for the clicking sounds to come again, but they had stopped. So had the loud buzzing that had permeated the room. Light was shining through the widow as dawn was breaking. I leaned over for my notepad and pen and wrote down everything I could remember about the crow's dream. The image of the terrain was crystal clear, and I could still hear the music of the mountains and feel it's melodic stains softly vibrate inside my body. When I had finished writing down my recollections, I put my notebook aside and dozed off again. I awoke several hours later with the sun shining in my eyes. I could tell by the light, it was going to be an extremely hot day. I sat up when I heard don Juan coming in the door.

"How were your accommodations?" he asked, opening a sack of groceries he had placed on the table. "Not too uncomfortable, I trust?"

"I had the most vivid dream of flying over the desert," I said.

He asked me to describe the dream in detail, which I did, for it was still fresh in my mind. He looked at me and smiled as if he knew I had deliberately left out the part about the two crows cavorting in the field.

"To turn into a crow in your dreams is not so far-fetched," he said. "To do it while you are awake is another matter."

"How can you turn into a crow while you are awake?"

"With unbending intent, the body will follow where the mind leads," he assured me.

I asked him to explain what he meant by that.

"You do it all the time," he said. "For example, when you activate a memory called unhappiness, your whole being immerses itself in that feeling and you become unhappy. That is why indulging in anything is not recommended. The mind is not separate from the body,

although we prefer to think that it is."

I opened a bottle of mineral water and took a sip.

"Every time we look in a mirror," don Juan said, "or see our reflection in a pool of water, we think we see the same person we saw the last time we looked. We may see a few changes such as wrinkles or a longer beard or a different expression, but we know these differences are superficial. They don't make us someone else. We have learned to recognize ourselves as beings that change, yet to our inner eye, we are nevertheless the same."

He leaned toward me and brought his face uncomfortably close to mine. "But it's only a mirage," he whispered. "That's why you should never look too closely in a mirror; you'll fix yourself permanently as something you don't want to be."

I suspected that Clara had told him of my repeated request to have mirrors installed in her bath house. I had a difficult time adjusting to not seeing my reflection, and kept trying to catch glimpses of myself on any shiny, reflective surface.

He reiterated that we are constantly changing and are never the same from moment to moment. Every new thought, action, or experience makes us different. It is only the memory of ourselves that assures us that we are continuous, stable and familiar.

"If we are always changing," I said, "how can we recognize ourselves?"

He said that there is no way of ever recognizing ourselves, because we are a mystery; totally unknown to ourselves and to others.

"That is one of the precepts of *stalking*," he stressed. "I learned it from my benefactor, the *nagual* Julian, and I am passing it on to you. We are an indescribable mystery."

"But I know who I am," I insisted.

"That's because you're a fool," don Juan said chuckling. "It's idiotic to believe that just because you have a name, an address, a job, or go to school, that you are known to yourself or to others. These attributes are not your true self; they are only ways of describing who you are, so that you can talk about yourself as a social person."

"Are you saying that I don't exist?"

“You do exist, but not in the way you think,” he said.

Don Juan stressed that the idea that the body is a constant continuous entity, is one of the most difficult assumptions to break.

“Why is that?” I asked taking a bite of the bread that he brought.

“Because people identify themselves with their bodies, which they view in the manner that is accepted by the world around them.”

I argued that the physical body is real and not just an appearance, but he insisted that to hold this position stemmed from limited perception and faulty reasoning.

“Your body is an idea, an abstraction,” he reiterated. “How you regard it depends on your culture and the modality of the time in which you live. For example, people of the past did not have the same view of the body as we do today, and Western man does not have the same view of it as does a sorcerer.”

“Don’t we all have basically the same physical structure?” I asked. “Two arms and legs and a torso?”

“If we all had the same physical make up, we would all be able to do the same things,” he replied. “But most people can’t fly through the air, or step through walls, or extend their *luminous fibers* to journey over vast distances. Or disappear right in front of your eyes.”

I must have given him a quizzical look, for he added, “some people can’t perceive their ethereal or *energetic body* that would allow them to perform these extraordinary feats. Therefore, unlike the sorcerer who daily tunes and invigorates his *energetic body*, his *double*, the average person does nothing to enhance it, but does everything to enhance his self-importance, his social person.”

“What do you mean by self-importance?” I asked.

Don Juan thought for a moment as if to chose his words. “It is placing undue emphasis on the idea a person has of himself. In order for that idea to become real, it must be given constant energy. One must always cater to it, sustain it, reinforce it, pamper it in order to keep it alive.”

When I asked him why that was so, don Juan replied that people have lost touch with their mysterious origins that render them unknown, and were left only with a paltry imitation, a

phantom idea that they regard as real.

“If people realized that they were unknown to themselves and to others, they would not regard themselves as important or prop themselves up with feeling special. They would know that they already are special, but having lost sight of their real mystery, they try to make themselves mysterious, and try to act important, but that is a deadly mistake.

“Why is that a mistake?”

“Because we should never try to be anything,” he replied. “Our mysterious nature already makes us everything we could possibly be.”

Don Juan said he wanted to go for another walk and told me to finish eating so I could accompany him.

“What about Carlos?” I asked “Shouldn’t I wait here for him? Isn’t he coming back today?”

Don Juan handed me a strip of beef jerky and told me to chew it slowly. “I have a feeling that Carlos will be occupied for most of the day,” he said.

I was dying to know what exactly Carlos would be occupied with. No doubt it was that pretty girl I had seen the other day in the store. I imagined the would spend the day teaching her English, or who knows what else. Noticing my preoccupation, don Juan gave me a firm rap on the top of the head with his knuckles.

“I know what you are thinking: ‘why would a man want another woman when he can have you?’ Your petty possessiveness is useless around here,” he said gruffly. “You have an idea of yourself that you are jealous and possessive. The sooner you get rid of that idea, the better off you’ll be.”

“That’s the way most women feel,” I said.

“Then that’s precisely what you will have to guard against,” he said sternly. “Remember, self importance kills. Don’t waste your limited energy upholding stands that are untenable. Hold firm to your underpinnings.”

He laughed at his play on words. Then he continued with earthy directness. “The minute a man pays any attention to a woman, she drops her ‘underpinnings.’”

“That’s simply not true,” I argued. “A women can love a man purely, without any physical involvement.”

“But can she love him if he loves other women, and not be ruffled by it?” he challenged.

I thought for a moment. He had a point. From my own experience, and from the people I had known, a selfless love like that would really not be feasible in our culture.

I shrugged. “If you’re talking about polygamy,” I said. “I don’t think we women should put up with that.”

I was so against men playing around that, for me, nothing short of total fidelity would do. I remembered how miserable my mother’s life had been because of my father’s indiscretions. From her, I had learned the attitude that men were heartless masters that would stop at nothing in using a woman then casting her aside without so much as a backward glance.

“I am not talking about polygamy,” don Juan said. "I am talking about freedom from self-importance. No one is unique or privileged by any stretch of the imagination.”

“But if we don’t see ourselves as unique or special, how can we distinguish ourselves from other people and things?” I asked.

“Why do you want to distinguish yourself from people or things?” he retorted. “Individuality is needed to interact in the world of people, but you already know how to do that. What I’m suggesting is an alternative mode of being in which your *energetic body* interacts with the *spirit*.”

“And what is the *spirit*?” I asked.

Don Juan looked at me steadily for a moment; his cold eyes became fierce like an eagle’s. His stare forced me to look away. He chuckled, lifted one of the gourds he had tied to his belt, opened the stopper and took a sip. I felt obliged to repeat my question.

“I really don’t know,” he said. “We can return to our origin, even act from it, but we can never know or say what it is.”

“Then what good is it, if we can't talk about it?” I protested in a tone that bordered on whining.

Don Juan grabbed my shoulders and shook them as if I were a rag doll. “Stop indulging in self

pity and act like a warrior."

He stomped his foot on the ground repeatedly like a bull ready to charge, giving me a ferocious look that made his nostrils flare. His pantomime was so lifelike that I had to step aside, afraid he would ram me, but instead of charging, he suddenly twirled lightly on his heels and walked out the door. He motioned for him to follow him. We walked down the dirt road for a while, then quite unexpectedly, he veered off into the chaparral. It was all I could do to keep up with him. After an exhausting trek, during which time I employed *not-doing* techniques, such as keeping my gaze above the horizon, and my hands in the proper position, and maintained a prolonged silence, I was still breathing heavily by the time we reached a formidable rock formation.

Don Juan told me to sit on a large bolder and to slow down my breathing. He said that in the tradition of sorcery there were hundreds if not thousands of *not-doing* techniques, each designed to produce a specific effect that had been intended by sorcerers of his lineage. The hand position was one of them, just as was gazing at a point above the horizon while walking. He reiterated that he personally thought that *not-doing* was one of the best ways a *stalker* has of disrupting routine or habitual reactions of one's day to day life.

"Do the match technique," he suggested, "to quiet down."

"Now?"

He nodded and poured a few drops of water from his gourd into a depression in the rock. I pulled out my book of matches, and holding one between my thumb and index finger, I struck it and brought the flame seven or eight inches in front of my eyes. As I gazed at it, I inhaled the flame into the area between the eyes, until the flame had almost burned down. Then, without extinguishing the flame, I dipped the tip of the match in the water to cool the end, and transferred it to the thumb and index fingers of my left hand. I held the match upside down, so that the flame was now burning upward a few inches from my eyes.

"Draw the blue flame into your eyes," don Juan said. "Use *intent* to pull it inside you."

I did a series of nine matches, burning one end, then turning it upside down as I transferred it to my left hand and gazed as the flame burned at the other end. After nine matches, he told me to stop. He instructed me to breath deeply from the abdomen and then begin to practice another *not-doing* technique which involved expanding my awareness behind me, above me, and into the distance all around me.

“What should I try to look for or feel?” I asked.

“It doesn’t matter,” he said. “Perhaps, a tree to the back, or a bird in the branch above you, or a cloud in the sky overhead. The purpose of this *not-doing* technique is to stretch oneself out as if one were casting a giant net.”

He explained that deliberately elongating one’s awareness, which is usually directed forward, has the effect of waking up the *energetic body* or *double*, by breaking through the confining boundaries one had learned to regard as one’s physical body.

“When your mind and breath are able to reach beyond the recognized limits of the physical body,” don Juan explained, “then you’ll know that things are vacuous, and physical and mental continuity is only an expression of the mind or social self.”

He assured me that our perception of the world is fundamentally tied to how we sense our bodies, and how elastic our breathing is. To change our perception of the world, we must begin by changing our awareness of our body. We must know that our bodies are in constant flux; yet, in order not to lose control during our ethereal wanderings, our awareness has to be firmly fixed.

“To what is our awareness fixed?” I asked.

“Not to the self or the objects of the world,” he assured me. “For these will keep you imprisoned. Rather, it is anchored to one’s breathing. The breath is the line that can pull you outside of your boundaries, and make your physical body appear and disappear.”

He told me to close my eyes, and try to anchor my awareness to my breathing.

I became apprehensive. Sometimes, when I practiced some of the *sorcery passes* Clara had taught me, I felt my body melt away, but I never ventured too far on that track for fear of losing myself or becoming totally unknown to myself. Even when I had dreamed I was a crow, I was still aware of being myself, *dreaming* I was a crow.

So I began cautiously. According to don Juan's instructions, I was to allow my awareness to flow outward in all directions, as I elongated my breathing. Then I was to link the stretching of my mind to the rhythmic flow of the breath. Finally, I had to merge my breathing, which was limited, to the limitless breathing of the earth and the sky. He told me to breathe far behind me, high above me and out to either side, until the vast desert around me moved rhythmically to the expansion and contraction of the breath.

After a time of total concentration, I had the sensation of moving like an enormous bellows; my entire panorama was pulsating to the same rhythm. At one point, I was so far away, that I could barely hear don Juan's voice urging me to open my eyes and describe to him what I had experience.

"I was no longer aware of my body," I said. "It became so enormous that I seemed to completely vanish."

"Your body can't vanish," he said, "for the simple reason that it was never there in the first place."

I rubbed my calves to bring blood back into them.

"It is the way you place your attention that makes you think you have a physical body," don Juan said. "Place your attention differently, and you will have a different body. Perhaps that of a horse or a cow or a falcon."

I told him I didn't want the body of a horse or a cow, but I wouldn't mind being a falcon, temporarily.

"You don't need to worry about changing your shape permanently," he assured me. "Fate has given you the form of a human being, and no matter where you are, that memory will always pull you back to that particular configuration, at least for the time being,"

He suggested that since I dreamed I was a crow flying over landscapes, I could try, if I had enough energy, to sustain that configuration for a short while using the breathing and my attention to bring about the change.

"*Stalking* with the *double* is what enables you to keep the assemblage point fixed in the new dream position," he said. "It means fleshing out all the ramifications of being a crow. What it means to fly, how crows feel and move, what it means to interact with other birds, and even to mate as a bird. You did that in your dream earlier. Let's see if you can move your assemblage point to that position now, starting from your waking state."

He swept clean an area of ground and spread out my poncho. Then he told me to lie on my stomach and repeat the breathing I had just done. Again I was to place all my awareness outside of myself, then use my mind to imagine I had formed wings, and my breathing to create the sensation of flying. After a period of intense concentration and controlled breathing,

I felt a heaviness on either side of me. It was as if I had gigantic wings, moving in a rhythmic fashion to the pattern of my breath. The area around my face had grown long and pointed, while my legs and arms had become numb and heavy, until they disappeared completely. I was looking down, the earth had grown transparent and I could see fields below me; all the while, the rhythmic expansion of my breath kept the giant wings in motion.

At one point, I heard don Juan whisper that I should slow down my breathing and try to soar for a while. At that suggestion, my breath came slower. I could feel the wind as scenes below me shifted and tree tops, scores of shrubs, and distant hills came into view. Then I took another breath and I was soaring again.

After a while don Juan told me to stop. He said I should open my eyes and concentrate on remembering my physical body again. As I did, I noticed that the area that was my chin was completely numb; it had been pressed against the hard ground. My arms and legs also were asleep, and it was some time before I could move them. Don Juan briskly rubbed my calves and arms until I felt an acute painful tingling sensation. When that sensation subsided, I felt solid again.

“Was I dreaming?” I asked after I had described to don Juan my experience.

“You were not asleep," don Juan assured me. “You used your *intent* and concentrated on your breath to change your shape. Whenever the breath gives life to an idea, that new configuration becomes real.”

He said the key to any transformation or sorcery shape-changing was combining the breath with an idea to give it life.

“Most of the time, a person has an idea without the power of the breath to actualize it," he said. “Or he may have the proper breath energy, without the *intent* to give it form and direction, but when breath and *intent* become united as movement and direction, energy and form, then a new reality is created and sustained for as long as the two are joined. That is what sorcerers call *stalking* with the *double*. It means to use the *energy body* to perceive a reality with form and substance and *energetic* validity.”

“It certainly felt as if I had had wings and were flying, and I don’t recall falling asleep,” I said. “It had been just as real as the world in front of me now.”

“Of course, you couldn’t sustain that *intent* for very long,” don Juan continued, “because to concentrate the breath and flesh out an idea, takes an extraordinary energy. I loaned you some

of mine so you had no problem in concentrating your breath and giving life to a different reality. A reality you had found on your own earlier while doing *dreaming*. Now you reactivated that same perceptual place. So you now have another position to go to, that's just as real as that of being a human being."

He reiterated that by combining *intent* and breath, one can for a time change one's perception of reality and will oneself to move beyond the confining limits of one's own bodily configuration.

"This is what sorcerers call *stalking* with the *double*," he repeated. "And this is what sorcerers do: they expand the possibilities of perceiving beyond the limit that is permitted to us as social person. In other words, this maximizes their experience as sentient beings."

Don Juan went on to say that to change into a bird or an animal, was one of the power positions handed down by the ancient sorcerers of his lineage. It is one of the *not-doing* techniques that is still in use today.

"To be a human being involves more than just being born, living then dying," he said. "It means to expand one's potential by going beyond known boundaries of one's existence and leaping into the unknown. For to have a body is not to merely be so much flesh and bone that has to be fed and kept alive at any cost."

"To be alive," he stressed, "is to be aware, to be a point of view that never knows it's own limits. Nevertheless, one must try to comprehend one's nature, to intuit from a finite perspective, one's infinite possibilities."

Don Juan said that another precept of the *stalker* was never to know what he was, but to always act as if he did know. "To flesh out reality and then discard it."

"That's what it means to be alive," he said. "To intuitively grasp the wonder of the world, and to boldly leap into the infinite in spite of our rational limitations. To link our breath with anything we can imagine, until we become so fluid and unknown to ourselves, that we become the unimaginable. To *stalk* with the *double* is to attempt to touch the bottomless springs of our mysterious origins."

Don Juan suggested that I sit quietly for a moment and contemplate what he had said, for changing shapes in the tradition of the sorcerers was a deliberate act of *not-doing* of the body, a complex maneuver of *stalking*.

“Only by departing from inner silence can one reach the deep level of awareness that will allow us to grasp and move intuitively,” he said. “Only by rest and renunciation can one circumvent the relentless control of reason.”

He uncorked his gourd and gave me a drink. Right away I felt better and noticed that the nervous tremor that had taken hold of my midsection had all but disappeared.

“It is not our body that makes us the same day after day,” he disclosed after a long silence. “One’s body is constantly changing, degenerating, and soon it will die. Regard your body as yourself, and you too will degenerate and die.”

“What, then, should I regard as myself?” I asked.

Don Juan smiled. His eyes became two slits as he peered at me.

“See yourself as a spirit that roams the realm of the unchanging,” he replied. “Consider yourself one with the mysterious darkness that is never increased or diminished. Regard yourself as these, and your potential will be limitless.”

Don Juan explained that whereas our bodies and our actions are in constant flux, only the realm of the dark mysterious remains constant because nothing can be added to it or taken from it. Therefore, in order to have genuine continuity, which is in essence no continuity at all, we must link ourselves to the strata beyond the world of appearance. Our bodies must become so abstract, that we become aware of *not-being*.

“We are what we are not,” Don Juan said cryptically. “And whatever we think we are, is temporary, illusory and only the smallest fragment of our true nature.”

“Then, if we can never know ourselves,” I said, “it seemed to me too lonely, too solitary a path to be beneficial.”

I had always thought that even if people were indifferent to one another, they were still there to fall back on. To be without a self would be to be without others, and that seemed to me the coldest most desolate mode of existence.

“There is no way you can ever be with yourself or others,” don Juan reiterated. “Except as *controlled folly*. We are the empty manifestations of an unknowable force sorcerers call the Eagle.”

He said the light that reaches our eyes are the Eagle's emanations. He stressed that it is a mistake for us to regard our acts as our own, or to think of ourselves in charge or in command. For to do so only perpetuates the false dichotomy of a self that is the motivating force of an action, and another self that is the doer or executor behind that action. It is that mind-body misconception that is at the root of our confusion. It leads to a false view of the world.

"Give your breath and *energy* to perpetuate the social person, and your real nature remains forever obscured," don Juan warned. "For the self, or the social, cultural image that one enhances with one's life force, is a mistake. It is only a way of thinking and talking, and not what we are at all."

He admitted that our true nature is one with the underlying force that sorcerers call the Eagle. *Seers* can *see* it's *energy* flowing through us and making up our very being; and we must humbly acknowledge that life force, or we remain blind to everything around us. I wanted don Juan to tell me more about this mysterious power that acts through us. He shrugged and replied that there was nothing more to say about it; that we simply were different aspects of the Eagle's emanations, just as was everything else in existence.

I pressed him to elaborate on it's attributes.

"Sorcerers have been unable to unravel it's mystery even though, throughout antiquity, *seers* have put all their efforts into attempting to understanding it, and because of this inability they called it the Great Unfathomable. The old sorcerers called it the Eagle because it stands with it's beak open ready to devour awareness at the moment of death. It's emanations are commands because we must follow them, just as planets must follow their orbits in the sky. Those who humbly acquiesce to the Eagle's commands, remain healthy and strong; those who fight against them, wear themselves out and find an early death."

He stressed that only by acquiescing to the force that moves us can we find well-being and purpose; happiness; fighting against it brings disease and unhappiness.

"In order to create anything," he explained, "we must draw from the emanations of the Eagle, from it's dark side and bring it into being, that is, into the field of awareness of man. This is how sorcerers make things happen; this is the true essence of magic. Since everything has a dark side and a light side, the dual elements of movement and rest, of activity and inaction, things can be flipped around, and that is how sorcerers cross the boundaries of the visible world into the realm of the invisible."

"Are you talking about the mythical realm of the Yaqui Indians?" I asked.

“I’m not just talking about the realm of the Yaqui Indians,” he stressed. “I am talking about all existence. If your awareness is linked to the origin of all things, you can accomplish seemingly impossible feats.”

“How does one do that?”

“Follow the natural rhythm of things, and moving with the energy around you,” he said. “If you want to act, you must be tranquil. By the same token, if you want to rest, you must fill yourself with activity.”

He said that when both elements, being and *not-being* are in balance, so that inside we are unchanging and imperturbable, but outside we are fluid and changeable, then we reflect the power behind all things. He added that in order to reflect the realm of the unchanging, we have to suspend our everyday view of the world. He stressed that suspending our human judgments is the first step into the realm of the unknowable, and for this to take place, quieting the internal dialogue is a fundamental prerequisite.

“Therefore, it is of utmost importance to achieve *inner silence* through the practice of the *recapitulation*, the *sorcery passes*, and all the sorcery *not-doing* techniques you have been taught,” he said. “Only in this way can you lose yourself and be one with the vastness.”

Chapter 13: Places of Power

The afternoon brought cool relief. Don Juan and I had hiked to a place where volcanic eruptions had taken place millions of years ago. The area was strewn with huge chunks of lava and pieces of shiny obsidian that spread out on the desert like a lumpy gray carpet.

“The Yaqui Indians regard this as a place of power,” don Juan remarked. “They say that there is energy trapped in all this lava rock.”

“What kind of energy?” I asked catching my breath.

“The kind of energy that can make one discover things of the past. All one has to do is pick up a rock, be silent, and listen to it's message.”

“Do you really believe rocks can talk?” I asked. “Isn’t that a bit far-fetched?”

“Don’t take my word for it,” don Juan replied. “Find out for yourself whether or not it’s true.”

He pointed to a hill not far from where we were. “Let’s hike to the top of that mound. That’s the best spot to listen to rocks.”

We walked over the uneven terrain. Even though I had on a pair of thick crepe soled shoes, the rocks and obsidian glass were sharp and the loose stones made walking difficult. I was careful to avoid the patches of tuna cactus with thorny spines that jutted out between the clumps of rock. I had once been told that cactus spines were extremely dangerous, for they could lodge themselves in the body, and travel to the heart or even to the brain, causing sudden death. I didn’t know whether or not that was true, but I wasn’t about to put the theory to a test.

When we reached the top of the promontory, I was winded. I sat down to rest, taking in the magnificent view. I could see the entire desert valley with it's winding highway weaving in a southeasterly direction. The purple hills in the distance lay like a jagged cutout against the sky. Seemingly from nowhere a solitary crow flew toward us cawing as it passed overhead, Don Juan looked up to note it's direction of flight. It was flying into the afternoon sun.

“Does the flight of crows mean anything in particular?” I asked.

“You bet it does,” he replied dusting off his hat. “Especially if one has an affinity with them. Crows can be bearers of messages, but it’s easy to misinterpret the omens.”

“What happens if you get the message wrong?” I asked.

“All sorts of unfortunate things,” he said solemnly. “You could wind up going full speed ahead, when you should be biding your time. Or you could miss an appropriate turn in the road, because you hesitate to act.”

“You mean a crow could save your life?” I said.

“It could,” don Juan agreed. “Crows and other entities serve as guides. They tell a sorcerer what to do and when to do it. In the warrior’s world, timing is crucial. If you miss your chance, it may never come again.”

The finality of his words gave me a chill. I knew what he meant. There was a condition of being out of synchronization with life. It was a feeling of inner imbalance; of never catching the crest of the wave and riding with it, but always having it break on top of you. Therefore, instead of a

breathtaking ride, one feels tumbled, overwhelmed, as if something had crashed upon one full force when one wasn't ready or when one least expected it.

"That's what I mean by timing," don Juan agreed when I described to him this state.

"What causes this condition of being out of step?" I asked.

"Having lost our connection with our *double*," he said.

"I don't understand. Can you explain what you mean?"

"I mean that when we are born we are intrinsically connected to our other side. The lines of communication with the broader picture, so to speak, are open, but as we grow, we gradually cut off that connection and we live with only half our being. Therefore, we are always unbalanced and have the feeling we are missing something."

Don Juan paused for a moment as if wondering whether or not to continue. "There is something else," he said. "It has to do with the way a person is conceived."

"If you are going to tell me about the theory of the bored conception, I already heard that from Clara."

"Well, hear it again from me, because it obviously hasn't sunk in. The offspring of any love making will be full of energy and will have the power to live in the moment only if both parents were sexually excited. If only one parent had an outburst of excitation, the child's energetic nature will be imbalanced and a part of him will always lag behind. If neither of the parents felt very excited, which is usually the case after many years of living with someone, the child will be what we call a bored conception, and he will not be capable of energetically grasping life's flow."

"That's a dismal scenario," I said. "Isn't there anything one can do about it? After all we aren't responsible for what happened during the moment of our conception."

"Of course there are other factors besides the initial energetic thrust, and that's the challenge of reestablishing the link with the *double*. Anyone can do that, no matter how lethargically one was conceived."

"How can one reestablish a link with the *double*?" I asked.

“By curtailing *self-importance*. By not being concerned with the concreteness of things. By becoming abstract in one’s thinking and behavior. By treating everything as manifestations of energy, and not as objective reality. Focusing on the self takes the energy that one needs to act efficiently. For example, to regret past actions or to be too involved or concerned with the outcome of anything, weighs a person down so that he cannot act efficiently, spontaneously, and with the proper timing,”

“What if you just don’t know what to do or when to do it?” I said in a complaining tone.

“You must stop and wait, until you catch the motion of things,” don Juan replied. “And listen for the omens; watch the indications emitted from the world around you. They act directly on your *energetic body*. Of course, for that, you have to be absolutely fluid and have to reduce your desires to nothing. You must feel no hurry and have no need to control or manipulate things. Then you can listen to the world’s whispers. Sometimes omens tell you how to do something. Such as, for example, which plant to pick for a particular ailment. Or they predict the outcome of a course of action. Naturally, other forces can tell you these things too.”

“What other forces are those?”

“The voice of *seeing*, for example. That comes directly from your *energetic body*. Or it may come from another entity that advises you. At any rate, it advises you from a place not accessible to your everyday physical body, and you have to open a channel to that place.”

Don Juan was unusually serious, he kept glancing at the hillside as if waiting for someone or for something to happen. On an impulse, he raised his arms above his head and stretched. I imitated his movements that could be likened to a monkey bracketing on invisible tree branches. I couldn’t help noticing that the sky was a cerulean blue, not gray and hazy as in Los Angeles where sometimes you can’t see the high rises a few blocks away. The sky was a clear, impenetrable canopy, pure and crystalline. I imagined I could hear sounds from miles away, for there was nothing in the air to impede the waves coming toward us.

“Sit here for a while, quiet your thoughts and listen to the lava rocks,” don Juan said. “I’ll go to the other side of the hill so I won’t disturb your concentration.”

“You won’t disturb my concentration,” I said, but he was already walking around a bend. I was about to follow him when it occurred to me that he might have gone to relieve himself behind a boulder, I decided to stay put and try listening to the rocks as he had suggested, although I hadn’t the vaguest notion of what he meant by listening to the rocks, or what I was supposed to hear if it did listen to them.

It took me a long time to quiet my thoughts, I was angry with my mother for not having been sexually excited when she made me. Although Nelida had told me from her *seeing* that my father had been besides himself with passion, my mother had not liked him and had barely felt a thing. I blamed her for my deficiencies, for being dependent on others for my well-being, which I was well aware was a disastrous situation. As I was mulling this over in my mind, my eye was caught by a shiny object about twenty feet in font of me. The sun was reflected on a piece of glass, or perhaps it was obsidian, or even a piece of metal. As I gazed at it, my internal dialogue gradually ceased.

In the desert where everything is barren, the mind seems to flatten out as if to mirror the terrain. The jagged internal peaks of worry and discontent dissolve so that inside and out there are no barriers, no expectations, no preconceptions to interfere with the natural flow of energy. As I continued my gazing practice, I experienced a moment of welcomed release, as if concerns that had been weighing me down had suddenly been lifted from me. Until that moment, I had not realized the horrendous burden concerns about the self placed upon one. It seemed much easier to simply let go, rather than to carry them around like so much useless baggage.

I scanned the ground until I found what I was looking for. A rock that was near the shiny object, seemed to beckon me. I picked up the rock and looked at it. It was an ordinary piece of lava, light and porous, but somehow, I developed a rapport with it. It may sound strange to form a sympathetic bond with an inanimate object, but that rock had movement inside it. I gazed at it; it was smooth and round and had yellow specks shooting off it's black surface. I followed the lines with my eyes. Then I saw the glow around it, a bright buff color that seemed friendly and yet awesome at the same time in it's agelessness.

Following an inner directive, I held the rock to my abdomen. I didn't expect to hear anything, for I was not listened with my ears, and don Juan hadn't specified what I had to do, but surprisingly, the amorphous chunk of lava began to tell me things. I assured myself that I was merely imagining it, but it didn't matter; I listened anyway. It was a kind of game I was playing to humor don Juan so I would have something to report to him later. Mentally, I asked the rock from where it came from, and I immediately received a strong tingling sensation in my womb, and I instantly knew things about the rock that, to the rational mind, would have been absurd.

For example, the rock told me about the depth of the earth from where it had come, saying it was like a womb. It was born, or rather, spewed up by a tremendous force eons ago. It told me how it reckoned time in terms of eons rather than years the way we did, and, seen within the

limited temporal range we call history, our lives are insignificant with respect to eons gone by. It told me about our blindness, that grave misconception that we operate under, that we think we manipulate nature and control it, ourselves and others. When actually this is only a mirage, a quality of self-reflection and most of all a scarcity of time.

As I held the rock, I had a peculiar sense of seeing the broader picture, in which I was being controlled, driven by relentless forces to an inevitable destruction.

I felt this in my midsection as a series of soft ripples. It was a muffled movement coming from within the rock's core as I held it to my abdomen. I was absorbing the rock's essence until my entire body felt as if it were covered in layers of subtle vibration. Then a profound melancholy grasped me, as one existential question after another arose. Why am I alive? Who am I? What is the point of all this?

For a while I sat on the hilltop in the middle of nowhere, contemplating the futility of life, when a tremor when through me like the roll of thunder, that shook me to the core. I felt a release of feelings that I could not name or isolate. I remembered Clara's words; that there is no end to the wellsprings of man's indulgence. Instead of fighting or containing it, I let the shiver pass until all was still again.

I felt exhausted, as if a volcano had erupted spilling forth mountains of clinging and concern. Experiences that I had not thoroughly *recapitulation* gushed forth so suddenly that I could not stop to examine them; I didn't even have time to do the sweeping breath to breathe those feelings away. I understood how the baggage of memory and experience made me heavy, ponderous, encrusted with concerns about what I thought, felt, wanted to be, or didn't want to be. These mental fabrications served only weigh me down so that I was forever out of synchronization with time and life.

I wanted to let go of everything inside me, leave it all behind, start with nothing, so I could be free, but something in me did not want to let go. It clung to life and feared oblivion. Yet, the message of the lava rock: was to leave things as they are; not to worry about trivialities, not to strive or interfere. Things will take care of themselves. Live for today, for the weight of all our yesterdays will drag us down, and thoughts of tomorrow will distract us from our present purpose. The rock told me there is a way of perceiving without possessing, and that was by simply allowing life to unfold, to be what it is, outside yet inextricable merged with the self at any particular moment.

I looked at the rock and thanked it for it's messages. I was about to put it in my pocket to take it with me as a reminder of how important it is to let go when, I felt a tap on my right shoulder.

“Haven’t you learned anything from your gushing realizations?” I heard a voice say.

Instantly I dropped the rock and looked up petrified, panting instead of breathing. There in front of me was Nelida. I received such a jolt to my midsection that I feared I had to go to the bathroom on the spot. Nelida told me to immediately assume a half sitting, half kneeling posture that sorcerers use in moments of great upheaval. She helped me tuck my right leg under my crotch with my right foot pressing the perineum; my left knee was bent and my thigh and calf were pressed to my body.

“Use this posture of protection whenever you received a fright or jolt,” she advised.

I sat there for a few moments to compose myself. I had the certainty that Nelida had manifested herself out of nowhere on the hillside like the apparition of the Virgin. Then I realized the absurdity of this and told myself that probably Nelida had been waiting on the other side of the hill and don Juan had told her where to find me.

“I like the explanation of the Virgin appearing out of nowhere better!” Nelida said with a laugh. “I could be the Virgin of the Lava. Let’s build a grotto here on this spot. People would come from all over to venerate. As the saying goes, ‘Where there is veneration, even rocks emit light!’”

I laughed at her lighthearted humor and began to feel more at ease. Nelida sat down on a nearby boulder, I couldn’t help noticing how stylishly she was dressed. She had on khaki culottes and a matching jacket and high black boots that were made of soft Napa leather. She looked as if she was an advertisement for a travel magazine.

“Do you envy my outfit?” she asked noticing my furtive glances.

I felt myself flush. The last thing I wanted to do was to envy Nelida’s clothes, but something in me couldn’t help it. I was so disheveled, so rumpled that I felt like a sod of earth next to her cool, fresh appearance. How could anyone look so spiffy in the desert? It would never occur to me to dress up to go romping through the boulders and cactus.

“I wish I didn’t envy all the time,” I whined. “But I can’t help it. Every time I see someone with something expensive or good looking, I want it too.”

She laughed and reminded me that I had just spent an hour purging myself of desires and attachments.

“What happened to ail your cathartic realizations, little miss, Me-Too?” she said smiling. “Well, at least your glances don’t include men’s crotches.”

“I beg your pardon? Why would I look at men’s crotches?”

Nelida smiled. “You’d be surprised at how many woman are fixated on men’s rear ends. Whenever some women pass a man in the street, their eyes automatically wander down in that direction.”

“Well, to me men’s crotches are the least interesting part of their anatomy,” I said peeved.

“Perhaps,” she said with a sparkle, “but my point is that our eyes are trained to seek out things. For some of us it’s a good looking face or derriere, for others it’s articles of clothing. We were all trained like monkeys to grasp and covet things.”

“I suppose you’re right,” I said. “But I can’t help wanting the exciting things others have.”

“Don’t you know that to have possessions is unimportant?” she said. “There is no need to strive or struggle. Everything takes care of itself.”

I told her how my mother had spent her entire life struggling to acquire things: china, furniture, knickknacks for the house, and if she didn’t have the money to buy certain items, which was usually the case, she would feel deprived and unhappy. There was always that look of disappointment and envy in her eyes whenever we went to visit friends and she saw something for their house like a matching set of cookware, or matching luggage, or when one of her friends showed up with a new dress or coat.

“I refused to take anything that she had saved for me, when I left,” I said defiantly.

“You may not have taken her embroidered table cloths that she was saving for you in her hope chest,” Nelida said, “but you certainly took her envy. You would have been better off taking the napkins and silverware and leaving the coveting behind. That sense of coveting, was the legacy that she handed down to you.”

“It’s easy to leave something concrete like napkins,” I said. “Those are real, but envy isn’t real. How can I let go of something that isn’t real?”

“You begin by *recapitulating*,” Nelida said.

“I already *recapitulated* that and it didn’t work.”

“It works, but you keep going back to things that you should have let go of long ago.”

“I hadn’t even been aware that it was still part of my baggage,” I said.

“Well now you are aware of it,” she said, “Energy leaves from the eyes and also enters through them. So control your glances. It’s extremely important to train one’s eyes.”

“How can one train one’s eyes?”

“By placing all your *intent* in forging your *energy body* and never deviate from that purpose,” Nelida said. “*Recapitulating* is only the beginning. It loosens your affiliation with every day life and diminishes the force with which objects impinge on the *energy* from your eyes. Now use that added *energy* not to reinforce your envy, but to forge your *energy body*, your *double*. Instead of reflecting envy, use your eyes to energize the *double*. Only with your *energy body* will you be able to make the *abstract flight*.”

“Why do you call it the *abstract flight*?” I asked.

“Sorcerers believe that there are other universes besides the one into which you we born,” she replied, “but only someone who has stored enough energy is able to cross over and move through different intersections.”

“How are the other universes different?” I asked.

“The world we are born into is concrete and is determined by organic matter governed by physical laws,” she said. “It is linearly organized in terms of time time and factually organized in terms of space, but with enough energy we are able to cross over the boundaries that separate worlds upon worlds. Worlds in which energy is inorganic, not linear but circular, ever present and timeless. Those worlds are not made up of matter, but of energy and awareness, and one can only enter into the other realms by becoming formless and virtually abstract. In essence, one becomes the dream body and this crossing over is the *abstract flight*. So don’t waste your energy on envying concrete objects you can never take with you, but which only burden you down and will make you stay put. Use your energy to forge your *energy body* so you can make the *abstract flight*.”

“How do I forge my *energy body*?” I asked.

Nelida did not answer but beckoned me with a crook of her index finger to follow her. We left the hilltop and stopped at a clearing where she told me to light a fire. When we gathered enough wood, I lit a fire with my matches. Only then did Nelida make herself comfortable on a large rock and begin talking to me again.

"One *sorcery pass* in particular has the *intent* to forge the *energy body*," she said. "And someday someone will show it to you. Now we must use the flame to change the direction of your eyes so that they will no longer reflect human concerns but the *dreaming body*, the eyes of the *double*."

She told me to look at the flame through half closed lids, then turn my head to the left and visualize the fire coming from that direction. I then had to move my head to the center again and looked at the real flame again, and turn my head to the left again and visualize the flame. After repeating this action she said my eyes were fixed away from the direction of everyday life so that the things of the world would no longer have such a strong pull on me.

Chapter 14: Guests of Life

Nelida stood up and with a few sweeps of her foot, put out the fire.

"Shouldn't we wait here for don Juan?" I said.

She let out an exuberant laugh. "He'll know where to find us if he wants."

We hiked up a step canyon. I was exhausted and gulping in enormous gulps of air.

"I don't think I can make it to the top without a rest," I said.

"Don't be such a wimp. Aren't you curious to find out where I am taking you?"

"I need a rest," I insisted.

"What you need is to remember you are a guest of the earth," Nelida said as she sat down on a rock. "We can rest on rocks, leaning against trees, or simply by pressing our fingers against the center of the palm, but we don't realize we can get energy from little things, because we think we are here as conquerors of the earth."

I sat on a rock. Immediately, I sensed some of the energy of the boulder entering my spine through the pressure exerted on my tailbone.

Nelida continued, “when we feel that we own people and things, we are wasteful and arrogant. We are coercive and make maltreatment our style of being.”

To my surprise, the rock was comfortable and I wanted to ask Nelida questions so I could prolong this moment of rest.

“I don’t think we can extend the notion of ownership to include people,” I said. “This isn’t the middle ages where a feudal lord owns his land and his subjects.”

“Don’t fool yourself, Taisha. A mother rules her children; husbands still own their wives; a priest dominates his congregation, and the media mesmerizes the masses. The world abounds with tyrants, masters and slaves.”

Nelida said it was better to abandon such arrogant or submissive behavior and adopt the role of a humble guest.

“Why a guest?” I asked shifting on the sofa-rock.

“A guest is free,” Nelida said. “Not much is expected of him and the place he is visiting and the people there are not under his thumb. He expects nothing, yet is given everything. Sorcerers say this makes for a joyous journey.”

I was silent, trying to apply Nelida’s counsel to my own state of being. I had always thought it was a mark of character to be acquisitive, competitive, and whenever possible in control of people.

“Why not simply accept that we own and control nothing?” Nelida inquired. “We have to use things to help us on our journey, true, but nothing is ours to keep or control.”

“How can you say that?” I said, feeling threatened. I had grown up with the sense of never having had enough of material things or of being in control of my life. Now this sorceress was saying that it was deleterious to have material attachments.

As if sensing my revulsion, Nelida informed me that contrary to how it appeared, sorcerers did not covet possessions or try to dominate people.

“In fact, sorcerers maintain that not even the clothes on our backs are ours,” she said with a glint. “How can anything belong to us when we don’t have the power to hold it?”

“The shoes I’m wearing belong to me; I bought them myself,” I said playing the devil’s advocate.

“And I suppose you’ll keep them for the rest of your life, long after they have served their purpose,” Nelida scoffed with a derisive laugh.

She had me pegged. It was impossible for me to discard anything, even though it no longer functioned or I no longer had any use for it.

“It’s pointless to cling,” Nelida said in a softer tone. “How can your clothes belong to you when not even the body wearing them is yours?”

I thought she was carrying the idea of not owning anything to the extreme. I began to defend my point as if my life depended on it, but she merely laughed at me.

“You’re better off abandoning, right from the start, the idea of having or owning things,” she advised, “and adopt a new mode of regarding yourself and others in which nothing is ours, not even ourselves. This way you cut through the sham of having things and the resulting burden of having to guard your possessions. *Stalkers* are fluid and frugal. They are free from encumbrances.”

I didn’t like what she was saying. I had visions of having to dispose of my things in a giant garage sale. The frugality of the sorcerer’s world was repugnant to me. I was raised with the idea of someday having a house, furniture, a car and beautiful, stylish clothes. As an adolescent I would look at fashion magazines, and imagine that one day I would be able to afford the clothes featured in them, and I had to admit that the dream of owning my own home was always just over the horizon.

“Let’s continue walking while we talk,” Nelida said and stood up.

She petted the rock she had been sitting on as if it were a puppy, then sniffed out a few times.

“The adjustment that sorcerers have to make,” she said as she walked, “is that they cease to regard their body as their own. Then there is nothing they can lose, not even life itself.”

Nelida explained that one of the fundamental aims of *stalking* is to care for the body, not as an object or possession, but as a temporary guest. “By treating it impeccably,” she said, “we turn it into a most efficient vehicle for our journey.”

“This means you don’t indulge in food or drink, or anything that makes you tired, ill-at-ease, or sick, and you are never needy or wanting because there is nothing that you are lacking.”

I argued that what a person felt was a result of their circumstances. Some people, I informed her, are born into unfortunate circumstances, like poverty, and have to struggle to rise above it.

“That may be true,” she admitted, “but once a person *recapitulates* their life, poverty can no longer touch them.”

“I don’t see how that can be true,” I said.

“Simply because they are no longer there to be touched,” she said.

“How can a person live like that?” I argued. “I was thirteen years old before I had a new dress, and I wasn’t happy.”

Nelida laughed at my self-pitying tone. “You mean you wore the same old dress for thirteen years? That’s incredible.”

“No, of course not,” I said annoyed. “I mean everything I had worn up to that time were hand me-downs from my cousins. The new dress was a present for my thirteenth birthday. I still remember how my mother took me to a dress shop to pick out any dress I wanted. I nearly fainted from the tension of having to chose the perfect dress that I thought would have to last me for the rest of my life. I knew I would never get another one. It took me hours of trying things on, and agonizing decision-making for it had to be the perfect dress. On top of everything, I feared that at any moment, my mother would lose her patience and go home without buying me anything.”

“When I finally selected a flouncy maroon and navy blue sundress, my mother looked at me pathetically and said, ‘don’t tell me you’re going to choose that one?’ and I knew I had made the wrong choice, but I stubbornly insisted that I wanted that dress and no other. When I got home I wept, because, in it, I looked like a pillow sham.”

Nelida laughed even harder and urged me to stop feeling sorry for myself. She said I had been

fortunate for I could have made that dress, even if it looked like a bedspread, into a power object.

“Or you could have ripped it to shreds and thrown it in the trash,” she said.

I was shocked to hear her say that.

“I could never have done that,” I said. “It was the only new thing I owned. Besides, I had to wear it to my birthday party.”

“Look at it this way,” she said. “When you want nothing, that is the only time you can really be free to enjoy life. You never know what’s going to happen next, but since you are no longer attached to anything, it doesn’t matter; you simply enjoy the ride. That’s the sorcerer’s way,”

To me, it seemed impossible to arrive at a state of such complete detachment, and I admired Nelida immensely for having accomplished it.

“How can one become so detached?” I asked. “Isn’t it only natural to want to have things?”

Nelida shook her head. “Sorcerers say that our attachments and desires are mesmeric commands and so they can be broken by being aware of them and using other new mesmeric commands. Take your eyes, for example.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Your eyes. Are you aware that you constantly rub them?”

I told her that my eyes itched and that I was probably allergic to some of the flora in the vicinity, but I was not aware that I was rubbing them all the time.

“Your eyes itch because you irritate them by rubbing them. Why not simply leave them alone?”

I argued that if one’s eyes itched, it was an automatic reaction to rub them. Nelida shook her head; her eyes glistened in the sunlight.

“I suppose you consider having sensitive eyes an asset,” she remarked. “but I assure you it’s not. If you stop being concerned with them, the itching will go away.”

“How can I do that?”

“By being conscious of your hand and giving yourself the command not to rub them,” she said. “In this way, you will have a moment’s pause to alter the habit. It might take weeks or months of deliberate effort, but sooner or later the mesmeric command will be broken and you won’t be able to reach for your eyes without being aware of it.”

I couldn’t see why she was making such a mountain out of a molehill and was about to reach for my eyes but caught myself. Nelida said that most things we did were habits we no longer were aware of, so they controlled us.

“Being jealous, envious, reacting a certain way: all engage an awareness that you have made real and thus they rule your being,” she said.

“But you are talking about feelings,” I said. “How can you help what you feel?”

“You can change a feeling the same way you can stop excessive eating or drinking or smoking or anything else you want to change.”

Nelida explained that the secret to success lay in being aware of the behavior we want to change and then to deliberately altering it's flow by an act of *not-doing*. When we disrupt the natural flow of a feeling or action, we are practicing what sorcerers call, *not-doing*. “Sorcerers practice *not-doing* in order to change,” she said.

“But first you must be aware of the pattern, and for that you need a deep, thorough *recapitulation*. If, as in your case, you have learned to react by feeling sorry for yourself or envying others, then every time that feeling comes to you, be aware of it. *Stalk* yourself; map out your weaknesses. Then you have a choice to continue or to change. Finally, you can *intend* anything away before it entraps you.”

“It sounds easy, but is it really possible to change a lifelong habit?”

“You bet it is,” Nelida said. “But it takes a great deal of energy. *Recapitulating* helps you acquire the added energy needed for extraordinary feats such as breaking people’s mesmeric commands.”

I remembered Clara saying the same thing.

“The difficulty arises when we become obsessive and we turn everything into another doing,” Nelida said. “You must regard *not-doing* as a game. Perform it often enough and you will see

that feelings and desires are only places where we have accumulated energy. Remove this energy and you remove the desire itself."

Nelida stood up and stretched. At least I thought that was what she was doing.

"One other thing," she said, "*not-doing* will not work without the sorcerer's cloak of confidence."

Try as I might, I couldn't remember anyone talking about the cloak of confidence.

"The *sorcery pass* I just showed you allows your *energy body* to wrap itself in that cloak," Nelida said.

She stretched her arms out to each side and took a deep breath. Then she raised her arms to her shoulder level and bent her elbows, keeping the palms of her hands facing down. She squeezed her shoulder blades together while her arms barely moved at all. Then exhaling slowly and evenly, she brought her arms around to the front and placed her palms together with her finger tips pointing upward.

"Why do sorcerers call this movement, 'the cloak of confidence'?" I asked.

"This movement tightens the bands of energy across the chest. By pushing the chest outward, and the shoulder blades backwards, the energy lines that are sagging become taunt again. That bar across the chest of the *energy body* serves as a shield. Things bounce off it, and that gives one a sense of confidence when facing the world of doing,"

I repeated this motion several times until I felt comfortable with it. With a surge of energy, I made it to the top of the ridge, stumbling over loose rocks as I scrambled up the trail. When I got to the top, I let out an involuntary gasp. Hidden in the tall bushy trees was a high gray wall that had partially crumbled away, and a shattered archway leading into a hacienda gone to ruin. I could see broken statues and columns on the ground. Steps covered with weeds led to a flat area that once had been a magnificent courtyard. There was even a church that was part of the compound and many secondary outbuildings that clustered within the walls. I felt my heart leap with excitement.

"What on earth is such a huge hacienda doing out here?" I gasped.

"It was built hundreds of years ago and was moved to this spot by the ancient sorcerers," Nelida replied. "Your awe comes from the energy that the sorcerers left in that place."

“Wait a minute, Nelida. Did you say the sorcerers moved it to this place? How was that possible? It would have taken a work crew of thousands of people to dismantle the original buildings and move them stone by stone over this rugged terrain.”

Nelida shook her head, “They didn’t dismantle and rebuild it,” she said. “The ancient sorcerers *intended* it. They could cause entire cities to move simply by using their *intent*. A single hacienda was no great feat for them.”

Nelida suggested we walk around the outer grounds to make our presence known, for the place oozed sorcerers’ *intent* and we had to announce ourselves first, before bursting in on it. As we walked she stressed that the buildings had been deliberately set on an energetic fissure in the earth, and so it exuded power. It was this power that gave my body an added boost, whereas before it was dormant.

“When energy is circulated, fatigue leaves the body,” she said, as we came to the walls that had long ago crumbled away.

Suddenly, Nelida let out a shriek that set the hairs on my arms standing at attention.

“Do I have to yell too?” I asked with a shiver.

“Of course. You have to let *intent* know you are here. Otherwise it may spit you out. Then you wouldn’t be able to escape fast enough, should the power of the old sorcerers turns against you.”

I took a deep breath, faced the entrance and yelled, “*intent*”, three times, as loud as I could. An echo, as if the ancient sorcerers were yelling back, made it even more eerie. When I had finished yelling, Nelida peered into my eyes and asked me how I felt. I told her that I was frightened out of my pants, but in spite of that, I felt totally refreshed.

“Good,” she said. “That means that the ancient sorcerers’ energy has a beneficial effect on you and we can proceed.”

“What if I felt tired instead?” I asked.

“We would have to turn back the way we came and you would miss the lessons in store for you here. Now, sit and let silence envelop you, so we can proceed through the portals.”

I had heard Nelida say this before, many times, but I still didn't know what "letting silence envelop me" meant on a practical level. I asked her to be more specific. She replied that I had just done it, to some extend, with the help of the sorcerer's cry. She elaborated that in order to be silent, one had to let go of the self, and for that, one needed to grab onto something else, for example, the sun's light, or the breath, or to *intent* itself via the power cry. In this way energy is release and power can be harnessed. Nelida explained that unveiling and accumulating power was the ancient sorcerers primary aim.

"And how does one unveil power?" I asked.

Nelida sat down on a nearby step. She assumed the right calf in front of the chest position with her hands wrapped around her calf, while sitting on her bent left leg. She told me to assume the same ancient sorcerers *not-doing* posture.

"There are many ways to entice power," she began, "but they all come down to one thing, and that is to perform every action with awareness. Whether you sit, walk or eat or practice the *sorcery passes*, every breath you take must be a breath for power. Then, gradually, the spirit begins to disclose itself and your *energy body* wakes up. The yell enables you to clear a path to *intent* as well as gives your *energy body* a jolt."

I jumped up saying I was ready to explore the ruins and to examine some of the figurines I had seen in the courtyard. Perhaps they were pre-Columbian artifacts I could take back to the archaeological museum at the university, but Nelida was adamant.

"Sit down. We are not here on a treasure hunt or to do research for a term paper."

She assured me that such explorations would be meaningless, for they would not help me in my tasks to unveil and harness power. The only things that would be of any value to our present purpose, were silence and detachment.

"Don't get on your high horse and turn this into another doing," she warned. "Let power act through you. Then everything will fall into place naturally."

I told her that her recommendation was much too vague to be of any practical value. She leaned closer and whispered that she would reveal the only thing that was of any practical value, for it was the key to freedom.

"The ancient sorcerers were very practical people," she said. "So practical, in fact, that they lost themselves in procedures. Modern sorcerers saw that the road of the ancients lead to ruin. So

they isolated impeccability as their only guide, and why is impeccability the key to freedom?"

Nelida did not wait for me to offer a reply.

"Impeccability is the other side of the spirit. Like two sides of a coin or two sides of a hill,"

I wanted to ask her what she meant by impeccability but she stopped me with a wave of her hand. Smoothly she changed her position to bring her left knee to her chest and sat on her right bent leg. I copied her. She turned to gaze at the top of the hill we had just climbed down.

"The ancient sorcerers could go right though that hillside and land on the top, or on the other side," Nelida said. "They didn't need to climb to the top first the way we did. They needed only awareness and *intent* to control the direction of their flight, but some of us have less energy, so that all our actions have to be geared toward being impeccable. Only in this way, can we store enough power to let go of the personal self and land on the other side of the mountain."

Nelida picked up a stick and drew a curve on the ground that resembled the slope of a mountainside.

"On this side there is impeccability," she said pointing with her stick. "Our bodies and our actions and all the things we see and feel must be tuned with awareness and control. On the other side is pure understanding that makes us abandon ourselves. In the middle is a barrier made up of concern that veils everything. It is the fog that must be purified in order to see the other side clearly."

Nelida pointed to the middle line of her drawing—the heavy part that formed the mountainside. She said that in our mesmeric state, we only see the personal self and direct everything towards it's enhancement. Since it is the self that governs our actions, they are superficial, shoddy and full of self. We believe the self is immortal, consequently we are indolent as if we had all the time in the world at our disposal, but once we realize there is something beyond the self, something veiled and mysterious, we begin to turn our attention and efforts towards unveiling it and exploring it's mystery.

"The less one emphasizes the self, the higher the spirit will soar," Nelida said. "On the other hand, the more self-important we are, the more we cling to emotions, judgments and ideas. Remove the emphasis on the self and the spirit will soar."

"Is there a special chant or breath one can do to get rid of the self once and for all?" I asked.

“What a question! Have you forgotten about the *recapitulation*? Have you lost sight of the *sorcery passes*?”

“No, I only meant that was there a shorter, quicker way. *Recapitulation* takes so long.”

“There are no shortcuts to power,” Nelida said, “Yet anything is helpful when done with the proper attitude.”

“What would the proper attitude be?”

“When one is sincere and truthful to one’s purpose; when one does not act for personal gain; when one is abandoned and doesn’t care a hoot about what happens to herself, then the mountain of self-reflection becomes so transparent that the spirit can be seen,”

Nelida stressed that to liberate the *energy body*, and to tap the spirit was the goal of modern sorcerers.

“Why is that their goal?”

“Because only freedom can bring joy and ease into our lives,” she said, “Only pure, humble acts can attract power that is needed to cut through the apes’ judgments and doings.”

Nelida added that just as people don’t know how to live without the self, the ancient sorcerers didn’t know how to live without power. “Modern sorcerers have a different orientation,” she said.

“How are they bound?”

“They are not interested in controlling people; modern sorcerers are bound to the spirit.”

For a while we were immersed in total silence, I let the place fill me with it's vibrant charge. Then I became aware of the sound of birds. Perhaps they had been there all along only I hadn’t noticed them before.

“It is difficult to let go,” Nelida continued, “because we fear we will have nothing to fall back on, but that’s only because we haven’t yet realized that the personal self is illusory.”

“How does one finally let go then?” I asked.

“Letting go is a matter of abandon. When one does it, it is all at once. For some, it may take years of deliberation; for others, it only takes a sudden realization, but when one finally abandons oneself to power, it brings with it a fluidity that makes the actions of the self seem dull and cumbersome in comparison.”

Nelida stressed that letting go of the self was a *stalker’s* art. One had no qualms in dropping one’s person, for one finds it a burden too heavy to carry.

“Why is the self a burden?” I asked. “Doesn’t it help us in our life?”

“It ought to, but in most cases it is a source of fear and discontentment. If you really listen to your internal monologue, you realize that it is nothing but a long list of complaints or self assertion. A *stalker* takes an inventory of his internal talk, examines it and then discards it, I recommend you do the same. For the internal monologue links you to the feelings that belong to your parents and to their parents for generations back, and unless you divest yourself of them, they will extend themselves into the future ensnaring you for the rest of your life.”

The sound of birds stopped. Even the wind had stopped blowing, somewhere in the distance I heard a rustling in the underbrush; perhaps a rabbit or lizard scurrying away. Then I heard the sounds of crickets and realized that they too were under the spell of a mesmeric command.

“Sorcerers, in order to be free, break away from the human heritage or what we call the human condition,” Nelida continued. “Through discipline, they remove themselves from the chain of apelike existence, with no future or past to bind them. Buddhist call this, ‘liberating oneself from the wheel of life.’ Sorcerers call it ‘puking out one’s ape-like existence.’”

A feeling of misery swept over me. I knew I was lost. The process of *recapitulating* was never ending. Everything I did or felt or hoped for was fuel for the *recapitulation*. Unless I stopped acting altogether, I was creating more entanglements. Theoretically I could appreciate the need for ‘*not doing*’, but in actual practice, I still wanted to be in control, to be liked and respected by others, to be in charge of my life. The thought of not getting these things, filled me with frustration.

“Whether we agree with the sorcery teachings or not,” Nelida continued sensing my mood, “self reflection must be stopped or else we will spend our entire existence trying to fulfill the expectations of our parents and peers. What’s worse, we become the petty tyrants we struggle to overthrow. Only by leaving home, family, past and future can we truly be free.”

I asked Nelida what she meant by leaving home. I had left home, yet I wasn’t free.

“That’s because you still carry your parents’ feelings with you,” she said. “You are ambitious like your father, you are looking for love like your mother; you want instant success with no effort. You are in deadly competition with your bothers and that puts you at odds with everything and everyone around you. Therefore, human concerns are as near to you as they can be.”

“Leaving home is not merely saying goodbye to family and friends or putting distance between you. It involves relinquishing your place in the emotional food chain: that line that is made up of ancestors and decedents. You must give up your human heritage and it's rewards and security, and take yourself out of the quagmire of human affairs. Only when you are so detached that you are no longer bound by a personal self, can you truthfully say that you are no longer your parent’s child.”

“As long as one is hooked to the self, one is hooked to others,” she stressed. “Only when one has nothing, expects nothing and needs nothing, is one truly without a self.”

“But I did the *recapitulation* and I’m still hooked to others,” I said whining.

Nelida stood up and gave me a surprised look, as if she doubted what I was saying.

“You are hooked to the sorcerer’s *intent*. All you need to do is to acquiesce to it. You have evolved, through accumulating power, into something else, and that is why we are here on this place of the ancient sorcerers: to prove to your reason that you are no longer your parent’s child.”

“How will we do that?”

“By examining the background as well as the foreground.”

I gave Nelida a blank stare. Without another word, she got up and asked me to follow her inside the courtyard. We passed a series of tiny rooms, with doors no more than four feet in height.

“The ancient sorcerers must have been midgets,” I mumbled.

“*Recapitulation* chambers,” Nelida said. “But we are not here to *recapitulate* but to practice *gazing* and through *gazing* move our *assemblage point* to the place of the ancient sorcerers.”

She told me to sit, and make myself comfortable by leaning against a wall. In front of me were a series of pillars, seven to be exact, arranged in a cluster. They seemed to have been, at one time, the supports of a low roof or very high altar. I gazed at them for a long time looking not with my eyes, but with a feeling that emanated from my womb the way Emilito had taught me. At one point, I succeed in pushing the pillars away from me using my gaze. Then, suddenly, it was not the pillars that were being pushed away but I was being hurled up and backwards a great distance.

I found myself on top of a hill looking down at the pillars. They were at the end of a long tunnel, tiny and in sharp focus as if I were looking through the wrong end of binoculars. Then each of the pillars grew taller, as high as the sky. It was as if a giant grid with cracks in it had formed in front of my eyes. The world, as it normally is perceived, had split into segments with each segment separated by a black column. I was looking at the sky and at the same time behind the sky into infinity. Then the pillars shrunk until I was again looking at them head on. Nelida nudged my side. I realized I had fallen over and had perhaps passed out.

“What happened!?” I exclaimed, sitting up. “I had a complete distortion of perception. Those pillars were enormous and I was looking at them from the top of a hill.”

“That was not a perceptual distortion,” Nelida clarified when I told her what I saw. “Since you entered the sorcerer’s world, your acts are performed in a different context, only your reason refuses to accept this. If you only see what your reason tells you, your acts tend to be shallow, haphazard. In order to see the deep context, you have to remove yourself from your immediate surroundings and that is exactly what you did.”

“Tell me again what I did.”

“You expanded your vision. The sorcerer’s place of power allowed you to do this. Otherwise, you would never know what you are and where you are at any given moment. Not to see where you come from is disastrous.”

I asked her to explain more in detail what happened so I could better understand what she was driving at.

“You were on the cliff looking down on the ruins and suddenly you found yourself sitting on this rock looking at the pillars. You might think that you only dreamed that you were sitting on the hilltop and that the pillars were your dream. That is because you regarded the ruins you saw earlier from the ground as real.”

“On the other hand, you might remember having hiked down the mountainside, but if you don’t recall sitting down on this rock you might think you are dreaming this now. The view from the hilltop and the ruins you see now belonged to two different peals of reality.

“The way the ruins appear, their very existence, depended on the position of your assemblage point. Today you succeeded in moving it slightly, so you saw from two different perspectives.”

What Nelida was saying was that what we perceive hinges on our capacity and intensity for awareness. As our assemblage point shifts, so does our perception of the world around us, Nelida went on to say that it was because we can hold our assemblage point steady that we can agree and talk about the things we see.

“But the world is not just what we can agree upon,” she stressed. “Sorcerers say there are many levels of reality and waking up our *energy body* allows us to perceive with a keener awareness so that nothing is the same. You experienced this for yourself.”

Nelida had often told me that the world is alive and in constant flux, but I always seemed to lapse into my habitual view of it. She said this was because patterns become fixed and stored in a vast storehouse of memory to be called upon again and again. This results in the sensation that the world we perceive is concrete and predictable.

“We human beings are extremely limited in our repertoire of feelings and actions. You should know this from the *recapitulation*. We are like drunkards that head straight for the bottle without ever questioning why we drink or even the desirability of drinking.”

She stated that a set of patterns is presented to us from infancy and reinforced by mesmeric commands that make us repeat them over and over.

“We become limited because we no longer look at the larger picture. We simply allow our bodies to follows the lines of least resistance, and that is, whatever is familiar and know to us. To be aware would mean to allow our *energy body* to act for us regardless of what we may have learned to consider as easy or reasonable. To allow awareness to guide us, would be comparable to the alcoholic refusing the bottle even though his whole being has learned to crave liquor.”

“Will his craving ever stop?”

“Yes, by emptying our storehouse through the *recapitulation*, we break the hold that concreteness has on us,” she said. “There is a quicker path. The *energy body* can wake up

suddenly and see that the self is not important. A person who liberates himself from the confines of self reflection will perceive in totally different way."

I had to agree. By waking up my *energy body*, my entire perspective had been altered. Yet the prospect of permanent change seemed staggering, but ultimately worthwhile. To clear my head I gazed at the rocks.

"Do I really have to leave the familiar world behind and enter some strange reality?" I asked at last.

"You only need to relinquish your idea of the world. But that is everything! For it is our ideas that fix us and make us concrete. And why, you might ask, do we have to forsake our ideas to be free?Because ideas are limiting whereas energy is limitless. In order to be one with sheer energy, we must first remove the obstacle of the self, for it is the fog that covers the real and immediate with the false and interpreted."

I began to squeeze my shoulder blades together to acquire confidence. As I scanned the pillars, I experienced another perceptual distortion: they appeared to be swaying in the wind. When I remarked on it, Nelida said that there were always distortions. Life was energy moving unfettered, yet we imprison and contain it by eliminating possibilities that do not fit our reasonable expectations.

"One who sees that reality is simply a point of view, acts for no reason and expects no rewards," Nelida said.

"Wouldn't such a person be terribly lonely?" I asked.

"Such a person isn't lonely because he or she has aligned himself with that force that moves us and makes us complete."

"How will I know if I'm acting from the spirit or for myself?" I asked, giving my shoulder blades a sharp squeeze.

Nelida gave me a dispassionate look. "As you continue to act impeccably, you accumulate personal power so that ultimately the spirit and your being become one. Then all your acts are the reflection of the spirit's *intent*."

Chapter 15: La Catalina

We walked towards a cluster of adobe houses, Carlos had parked the car about a quarter of a mile up the road so that it would not be seen from the houses.

"I'll show you where to wait but I don't want to go inside or to cross the curer's path," he said with a furtive glance.

"Why don't you want the curer to see you?" I asked suspiciously.

"Because that curer is a witch. I've had some run-ins with her in the past. So it's best that she does not associate you with me or with don Juan."

I was growing more and more apprehensive. "What should I tell her if she asks me why I am here?"

"Just say that you're a student of anthropology and that she came highly recommended by some people in Vicam Station, and you're here because you want her to look at the flea bites on your legs."

By the looks of the place, whoever lived there, seemed to be highly successful. The house was larger than the other Yaqui houses in the area, and the grounds around it looked clean and well kept. There were even a few ornamental potted plants by the door adding a decorative touch. An elderly couple were seated on a bench under the ramada. Two portly Mexican ladies were standing in the courtyard, waiting for their turn to see the curer. Seated on another bench was a woman with a child, and next to her sat a woman nursing an infant completely covered by a shawl. Towards the side of the house was a small corral where a donkey was kept. As I turned, I caught a glimpse of a man disappearing behind the corral as if he did not want to be seen.

"Doña Catalina is the best curer in Sonora," Carlos said as we sat down on a vacant bench some distance from the house. "Mexicans as well as Indians come to see her. Don Juan says that she has more power than all the curers in this area put together."

I noticed a touch of pride and also fear in his voice as he said this.

"Do you know her well?" I asked.

"Not at all. I met her once at a gathering of some of don Juan's colleagues. Although, on

several occasions, I have actually seen her work. She can remove a patient's organ, douse it in alcohol, and put it back into his body without making an incision or drawing blood."

"Come now," I said incredulously. "That's impossible. She must be using some sort of trickery."

I had heard of the "psychic surgery" used by some practitioners. It's purpose is similar to western surgery, except that no blood is drawn and the patient is conscious during the procedure, but, unlike western surgery, immediately afterwards the patient is able to get up and leave the premises with no scar or ill effects.

"I bet it's a question of faith healing, where the patient is highly suggestible," I offered.

The anthropological literature is abound with studies of faith healers who, through the laying on of hands, cause the patient to experience a catharsis of sorts, during which time the healing takes place. I had seen a demonstration of such healing on television. People just dropped their crutches and began to walk again, or, miraculously, they could hear or see. I had never given much credence to this sort of curing and had always considered it to fall into the category of what anthropologists called "healing by hysterical conversion." The effects in such cases were usually temporary and treated the symptoms rather than the illness itself, which often returned when the person came to his senses and the force of public support was removed.

"She's not a faith healer," Carlos said decisively.

"Then how does doña Catalina practice her art? Does she use sleight of hand?"

According to anthropological accounts, the only way such a surgery could possibly be produced, since it defies reason and the laws of science, is through the use of some sort of chicanery. The usual explanation offered is that the onlookers are put into a hypnotic trance through the use of repetitive sounds, such as chanting or drumming. Then the curer goes to work producing spectacular effects, much as a magician performs tricks that amaze an audience who only see what the magician allows them to see.

"No. She doesn't use sleight of hand," Carlos said. "Some charlatans probably do rely on tricks such as having a spare organ up their sleeve, but Catalina does something else, much more spectacular."

"What is that?" I asked laughing at the image of someone having a dripping goat's heart or

liver hidden under their poncho and producing it at just the right moment to amaze the onlookers.

“Catalina cures by changing the reality around her, and anyone who is witnessing the operation, including the patient himself, participates in this altered reality.”

“I don’t understand,” I said, moving away from a coughing patient who had come to stand by the bench where we were sitting.

“If we depart from the premise, as the sorcerers do, that the real world is also a dream world and that it can be perceptually altered if one has enough power, then the curer, who is also a sorceress, can change the reality immersing them by altering the consensus of the people involved. Then all those who are present actually witness a world with new perceptual parameters; they are forced to acknowledge what they see with a new intersubjective agreement to replace the old one.”

“Isn’t this a form of mass hypnosis?” I queried.

“Not really,” Carlos replied, “Unless you call being alive or what we are experiencing now a form of hypnosis. What Catalina does is to alter the awareness of her patients and the awareness of whoever is witnessing her curing, and of course her own awareness, which is subject to the *dreaming* and *stalking* abilities of sorcerers. Then whatever happens for them is as real as the world we are experiencing now sitting here on this bench.”

“You mean she uses her dream body during her curing sessions?" I asked.

“That is what happens. She has learned to utilize parts of her *dreaming* reality and is able to project it onto people’s everyday reality so powerfully and completely that profound disruptions take place. Then she uses her *stalking* techniques to fill in the breaks and makes life recognizable to the onlookers, although it's features are markedly different from the everyday reality, but just as real.”“How is it different from everyday reality?”

“Well, she can remove an organ without drawing blood. Within our consensual reality that is impossible to do.”

“I see what you mean,” I said with a shudder.

I wondered how healers like Catalina acquired such extraordinary powers to be able to change the world around them and cause everyone within their field of energy to experience the

inconceivable. Waiting for my turn, I grew more uneasy, wondering what she would do to me once I got into her field of energy, Carlos had assured me that her powers were genuine and that no trickery was involved and her fame attested to her skills as a curer.

We had to wait for over two hours until all the people before us had been seen. In all that time I had gotten one glimpse of the curer, although the man lurking behind the corral came out and stood there for a while watching us from a distance. When it was our turn, Carlos told me to go in and that he would wait for me in the car. He reminded me not to mention that I was associated with don Juan or himself, but to be attentive and see if I could detect anything strange about the curer. He emphasized that I should be silent and aware so I could catch as much as I could of doña Catalina's *stalking* techniques.

I entered the house with trepidation. A young Yaqui girl greeted me with a stern look. She seemed very capable and was even dressed as a nurse in a neat white uniform with white sandals. She asked me what my problem was. I immediately showed her the bites on my legs which fortunately were still red and virulent. She nodded and took a white index card from a metal file box and wrote down my name along with the date and the reason I was there.

When the curer was ready to see me, her young assistant led me into the inner room behind a dark wooden door. The girl handed her my card and quietly left the room. Immediately I sensed I was in the presence of a most remarkable woman. Doña Catalina was tall, perhaps in her mid forties, and had on an open white smock over a blouse and a straight skirt. Her jet black hair was pulled back by a headband and was held in place in a high bun. She had no wrinkles and had a beautifully sculptured face, but what were most striking were her eyes; they seemed to burn with an energy coming from every inch of her vibrant body. I had not seen eyes like that except on don Juan and his associates. This woman was handsome and had a mysterious inner power, I detected a confidence and a commanding manner that at the same time put me at ease, yet placed me somewhat at her mercy.

I thought that the first prerequisite of a successful healing situation, that of faith in the curer's ability, was easily met in this case. What's more, doña Catalina seemed to have a kindness and concern that immediately put me at ease despite the fact that she was a total stranger. I tried to talk to her in Spanish as best I could. She smiled at my efforts and said in fairly good English, "I want you to lie down on the bed with your head up."

I lay down on a narrow cot draped with a clean white sheet and a small pillow. Following her instructions, I kept my head up, off the pillow, which is what I thought she had said. It was an awkward position and I couldn't understand why I couldn't put my head down, but she had specifically said to lie with my "head up", so I strained my neck to keep my head off the cot.

Perhaps it was part of the curing procedure.

Doña Catalina gently pulled up my pant-legs and examined the bites on my legs. They were not as red or swollen as before, but they still itched and were virulent. A few scabs had already formed where I had been unable to restrain myself from scratching. I craned my neck to see what doña Catalina was doing; she was wiping my legs with some pungent liquid.

By now my neck was getting tired and I could hardly keep it off the pillow. Doña Catalina gently opened the front closure of my Levi's and eased up my shirt to expose my stomach. Then she put some lotion on her hands and began massaging my abdomen in a circular fashion, first in a clockwise direction, then in a counterclockwise direction. As she moved her hands, I felt her fingers doing strange things: it felt like tiny rodents feet moving all over my abdomen causing an itching sensation, as if her she were searching for something through her sense of touch.

At a given moment, I realized that what doña Catalina had meant was for me to lie on the cot "face up" and she had not meant for me to keep my head up at all. I relaxed my neck muscles and laughed to myself as my head gratefully hit the pillow. I had been literal-minded again, as usual, like the time in an ice skating class when the instructor had told everyone to skate to the music and I headed right toward the sound speakers.

I could hardly keep from giggling to myself. It must have been strange for doña Catalina to see a gringa not wanting to let her head touch the pillow. I knew she must have thought I was afraid of catching lice or that her pillow wasn't clean enough, I had an uncontrollable urge to giggle at my own stupidity and tried my best to suppress my mirth as doña Catalina kept exploring my stomach.

"Am I tickling you?" she asked noticing my suppressed smiles.

"No, I'm fine," I said, trying to control my giddiness.

I watched doña Catalina's expression as she worked. It was calm and serious. She was totally engrossed, searching with her fingers for clues of what was happening under the skin. When she was finished with the examination of my midsection, she gestured that I could adjust my clothing again.

"You have worms," she concluded, "I'm going to give you some medicine. Other than that you're perfectly healthy,"

I was shocked to hear that I had intestinal worms. I mentally ran though a list of things I had eaten since coming to Mexico. I concluded that the cause was probably the donkey meat I had eaten in Santa Ana.

“How do I get rid of them?” I asked tucking in my blouse.

“Stay away from men,” she said matter-of-factly.

“I beg your pardon?” I couldn’t see what men had to do with intestinal parasites.

“You still have many worms inside you,” she repeated.

Then I remembered what Clara had said about energetic worms. She had told me that during the sex act, men leave energetic filaments inside a woman's body which to a *seer* look like thousands of luminous worms. They remain inside the body of a woman for seven years, feeding off her energy and making her grow weaker as the recipient males grow stronger. Each renewed contact between a man and a woman, strengthens the ties, and makes the energetic worms even more active. Perhaps the itching I had felt in my abdomen were the worms being pushed around by doña Catalina's probing fingers.

“What can I do to get rid of them?” I asked alarmed. “Besides staying away from men?”

For years I had been leading a celibate life, so as not to renew the connection or vigor of any “worms” contracted through past encounters.

“Stay away from men,” she repeated. “Then in time, the worms will die out by themselves.”

I nodded. I wondered how she know about the luminous worms? Whether it was common knowledge among sorcerers. Or perhaps, it was a subtle trap so that I would reveal my connection with Clara or don Juan. I decided to play the devil’s advocate.

“How can you be sure I even have worms?” I asked.

“I felt them with my hands,” she replied. “There are more on your left side than on your right. These will be harder to get rid of. You are still attached to them and call them your own.”

I couldn’t think why that would be so. I had done a thorough *recapitulation* of all sexual encounters and felt very detached from them. I watched doña Catalina fill a small plastic bottle with some pink liquid that looked like pepto bismol. She tightly sealed the cap and placed the

bottle on the table.

“You are to take a teaspoonful three times a day,” she instructed. “Wash down there with water boiled with rosemary, eat more and worry less.”

“What makes you say I worry?” I asked sheepishly.

She looked me straight in the eyes.

“I can tell from the condition of your spleen,” she replied. “I wasn’t just massaging your stomach, I was examining each of your internal organs; your liver, spleen and kidneys. I can tell what you are feeling in them. If they are happy or sad, calm or agitated.”

“You mean to say that internal organs have emotions?” I asked.

She gave me the eeriest smile, and nodded. “If you don’t treat them well, they won’t give you a moment’s peace,” she said and handed me the pink medicine.

I asked her how much her fee was. She shrugged and said that the plastic bottle and medicine cost twenty pesos but that I could pay whatever I wanted to her assistant on my way out. I thanked her and was about to leave when she stopped me.

“You know Juan Matus, don’t you?” she said with a certainty that left no room for doubt. “Did he send you here?”

Remembering Carlos’s command not to mention that I was associated with them, I didn’t know what to say, so I just stared at her dumbly.

“Did he bring you?” she demanded again with an icy stare.

I was totally on the defensive. “No, he didn’t,” I said.

She looked at me surprised, as if she didn’t believe me.

“Really, I didn’t come with anyone by that name,” I insisted.

She lost her pleasant manner.

“I came with a friend. He’s waiting for me in the car.”

She gave me a penetrating glare that would freeze a lizard, then looked me up and down. "You're not like the rest," she said. "You certainly didn't come here to be cured. You have ulterior motives. Did you come here to spy on me or to steal my power?"

"Of course not," I said shocked. "I assure you, I had the best intentions."

"I don't believe you. You came to steal my curing secrets didn't you?"

All of a sudden I became terrified. I broke out in a cold sweat. I wanted to leave but she jumped in front of the door blocking the exit. I couldn't understand what had gotten into doña Catalina. A moment ago she was a ministering angel. Her gentleness and confidence, I knew now, were *stalkers* techniques designed to put me off guard. Now it was an instant reversal; she was an enemy, a dangerous adversary, a black sorceress of the most malignant kind.

"I don't know what you mean," I said. "I have to leave now. Please step aside." And to match her confidence, I added, although not quite as energetically as I would have liked, "I'm warning you, I know martial arts."

At that she looked at me and laughed. I took a few backward steps to place more distance between us. I did know martial arts but what good would that do in the face of this formidable opponent who was not only bigger than I was but much more powerful. Every inch of Catalina was bursting with an aggressive yet focused energy. While, I, on the other hand, was cowering until I hit the cot and could move back no further.

Catalina just laughed at me flashing her strong white teeth. Her laughter seem to be a challenge, an animal grin of aggression, about which there was nothing friendly or humorous.

"If you don't move away from that door. I'll yell for help," I warned. "My friend is by the car. He'll come running."

Actually, that was only partially true. What I had neglected to add was that Carlos had parked the car a quarter of a mile away, and we had walked to her house. If he was by the car, he wouldn't have heard me even if I had yelled at the top of my lungs.

"And my friend is waiting by the corral across the courtyard," she said with a smirk. "He'll come running even if I don't yell. If you don't believe me, just look out the window."

I looked out the window and saw the same man who had been lurking by the corral, standing

in the courtyard. At this distance I could tell there was something familiar about him. Then I remembered where I had seen him. It was while crossing the border at Nogales. It was the Indian who had caused me to faint and had taken that opportunity to pocket my gold pen. I felt fear grip my core as he gave me a most imperceptible nod of recognition, as if he, too, remembered the incident, I knew there was no escaping from this duo of sorcerers.

“Who is that man?” I demanded to know.

“He’s my protector,” Catalina said with a smile, “so don’t try any funny business.”

With a single movement of her hand she pulled at her headband, and her hair came tumbling down around her shoulder. She was absolutely wild, her eyes burning with fury. I was so frightened that my knees were shaking and I nearly sat down on the cot. On an impulse I decided to escape through the window. I jumped onto the cot and pushed the casement window open, but I had only gotten my head and torso out when I felt something like hot iron shackles clamp down on my ankles. I screamed and saw the witch tugging at my feet. I kicked so hard that she had to let go and jump backwards, but she had me in a disadvantageous position. I was panting, with cold fury. If only I had my crystals so I could point them at her, was the thought that came to mind, but they were in a drawer in my desk: in Los Angeles. A lot of good they did me there, when I really felt I needed to use them here.

No matter. I reached into my pocket and pretended to pull something out. I held my hands in the proper position for crystal dart throwing, with my arms extended and my index fingers pointing straight out at her.

“Watch out, I have crystals!” I yelled.

As I fixed her with my gaze, an unknown surge of strength filled me. No longer were my knees wobbling, they became strong, and my legs felt longer and longer, as if charged with an energy rising from the earth. My back cracked and straightened out, as energy shot up from the ground through my neck and out the top of my head. I seemed to be very tall, my head was practically touching the ceiling, and I was looking down at her, still pointing my fingers, with the imaginary crystal in my hands.

Somehow that did the trick. Catalina stepped out of the range of my aim and gave me a frightened look. The next moment she was her confident self again, but I was raving mad.

“Juan did send you didn’t he?” she said. “You’re his ally.”

“You’re crazy,” I said lowering my hands. “Allies aren’t human.”

I tried to control my breathing and as I did I shrunk in size until I was no longer stretched out. I moved to the door on rubbery legs, just as it opened and Carlos stepped in. I felt so relieved that I hadn’t time to consider what had happened. This feeling of being stretched out, was familiar. I had felt it before although I didn’t know where or when.

“That witch wouldn’t let me leave,” I mumbled to Carlos. “So I nearly zapped her with my crystals.”

I didn’t know what I was saying. My hands were like ice. My teeth were chattering; I was freezing cold.

Carlos took one look at Catalina, grabbed me by the arm and pulled me out of the house. I could hear the woman’s eerie laughter following us all the way to the car.

“That woman is insane,” I gasped. “She wouldn’t let me leave. She kept on insisting that don Juan sent me to steal her power. I don’t know what come over me. I think I hallucinated out of sheer anger or fright. I was so angry I nearly went through the roof, and I don’t mean that figuratively.”

“Catalina is the north wind,” Carlos said. “And very dangerous.”

“Then why did you bring me to her?” I demanded. “She seemed so friendly and competent at first.”

“Because she has power,” he replied, “I thought you might see how a real *stalker* operates. You saw her in action.”

“I certainly did, but wasn’t that dangerous?” I asked. “She knew I didn’t come there just for my flea bitten legs. Although she did give me some lotion which I left in the house.”

“As long as she didn’t suspect you were with me, I thought you would be safe, but I see I was wrong. She saw through you right way.”

“Not right away,” I corrected him. “Only later, as I was about to leave.”

When we got in the car, Carlos asked me to recount everything that happened from the moment I entered the house, which I did to the best of my recollection.

“It all started out so amicably, I had to keep from laughing because I thought she had wanted me to keep my head up throughout the session for some mysterious reason. So I held this awkward position for as long as my neck could stand it. Then when I realized my error, I couldn’t help giggling.”

“That must have been what threw her off the track,” Carlos said. “You laughing, and keeping your stomach tense. She couldn’t really *see* inside you until you relaxed your body. Then she could *see* you weren’t the same as everyone else.”

“What do you mean?”

“Catalina, being a *seer,* could *see* that your energy doesn’t flow the same way as her other patients.”

“What do you mean it doesn’t flow the same way? How is it different?”

“It isn’t quite the human pattern of energetic movement,” Carlos said. “That’s what gave her the idea that you were don Juan’s *ally*.”

“She certainly did get suspicious. She kept asking me if don Juan had sent me, and I kept insisting that he didn’t. Then she really got angry and accused me of coming to steal her power, which certainly wasn’t the case.”

Carlos listened to the rest of my account in silence, especially when I told him about the strange man in the back of her house. My teeth were still chattering; just the thought of that woman and her protector made me shiver. North wind or not, she certainly could make someone freeze to the core. Carlos said I shouldn’t talk about her anymore, because the more - we talked about her, the easier it was for her to track us through our thoughts.

“You mean she’s going to follow us?”

“She’s a powerful witch. She can follow us to the ends of the earth if she has the mind to, but I think she just wants us out of this area. We’d better just get our things and leave.”

“You mean she’s running us out of town? What would happen if we didn’t go?”

“She could make life very uncomfortable for us, especially at night. I wouldn’t want to incur her wrath more than we already have.”

“But I didn’t mean any harm,” I said. “I didn’t even know what I was supposed to look for.”

“Her *stalking* techniques,” Carlos reminded me.

“Like what?”

“Didn’t you notice her appearance? Was she old or young? Confident or at ease?”

“She was very beautiful and confident and at ease. I liked her. I don’t know why she reacted as she did. Are you sure we shouldn’t go back and talk to her? Straighten things out?”

“Believe me, it’s better not to antagonize her further. There’s no end to her power. You saw how young she made herself look.”

“What do you mean, ‘made herself look?’ How old is she?”

“She’s the *nagual* Julian’s cohort. That makes her very, very old.”

“That would make her over a hundred,” I gasped. “But she didn’t look a day over forty!”

“Exactly. We’ll leave here right away.”

“Do you think she’ll let us go?”

“Your display of the *double* caught her off guard. I saw the tail end of it. You must have put the fear of the devil in her.”

"What display? All I wanted to do was to get out of there.”

“Something came to your rescue, and it wasn’t me.”

“Where will we go?” I asked.

“We have two choices,” Carlos said. “We can either go north to Los Angeles, or we can go south to Guadalajara.”

Just then a crow alighted from a tree branch and flew toward the hills in the distance. I opened my compass and checked the direction; it was flying due south.

“My feeling is we still have unfinished business in Mexico,” Carlos said as the car picked up speed.

Chapter 16: The Marketplace

We drove long into the night without stopping. I was afraid to close my eyes even for an instant for fear of seeing the face of the witch, Catalina. Even with my eyes open, I could not get her visage out of my mind. She had worked herself into my thoughts and had gotten a foothold there, as if she had left her energy inside me, or had removed something of mine that was vital for my well being. I was certain she was doing witchcraft on the level of the invisible, and all my efforts went to fighting an exhausting battle of the will. Carlos was right, she was pursuing us, and I had a gnawing anxiety that if I fell asleep, something terrible would happen.

For an instant my eyes drooped and in my drowsy state, the smudges of dirt and light reflected on the windshield became the awesome face of Catalina with large teeth and glowing eyes. The trees outside were her black hair flowing like a banshee. I shook my head to dispel her image, yet I couldn’t help being obsessed with what had happened.

Now her face was burned into my memory forever, like a flame after staring at it too long. I felt like a moth flying erratically around a light bulb; unable to break the fixation I had with that woman and her power. Also, I couldn’t help worrying about the luminous worms that she had said were draining my energy. I thought I had gotten rid of all of them during the *recapitulation* I had done under Clara’s guidance, but seven years had not elapsed, and according to the sorcerers, that was the duration for luminous worms existing inside a woman’s womb.

All I could think of was that Catalina had “awakened” the luminous worms in my stomach by massaging it. I thought of the girl in the store who wanted to go the United States with Carlos. I felt a pang of jealousy and hated myself for feeling that way. The witch, Catalina had me pegged. In spite of my denying it, I was still attached to men, and being loved and accepted was prominent, despite anything I said or did to the contrary.

I tried to think of other things, but the darkness around us was too engulfing. It seemed to be darker than a normal night. That worried me. I glanced over at Carlos but he was as worried and preoccupied as I was. For distraction, I asked him to describe the kinship system of the Yaqui Indians, and whether they had the mother-in-law “joking relationship” pattern,

predominant in so many other cultures.

“Is there mother-in-law avoidance among the Yaqui?” I asked.

Carlos looked at me as if I were a cockroach.

“I mean according to Malinowsky, based on his work in the Trobriand Islands, there is usually an avoidance structure set up between the husband and the wife’s mother. Or is between the mother’s brother and the sister’s daughter? That would be an incest taboo since it would make him her uncle.”

“It’s better just to keep quiet, rather than to talk nonsense,” Carlos said turning his eyes back to the road.

I felt a jolt. I knew he was angry with me because of the luminous worm. I felt like a traitor, guilty of still being energetically attached to men that, by now, I didn’t give a fig about. I had one foot in the world of sorcery, the other gangrenous one, was immersed in the world of human affairs. Upon more soul searching, I realized I was still concerned with finding love, thinking of who will take care of me in times of need, and what will happen to me if I didn’t succeed in the sorcerer’s world. I was investing, expecting rewards for my efforts, and when no rewards were forthcoming, I tended to give up and revert back to my familiar pattern of behavior.

As we drove in the dark, memories came back to haunt me. I couldn’t believe they still had such a powerful emotional valence. I was certain Catalina had stirred up a can of worms during her treatment, and because of it, I could remember every detail of things that had taken place years ago.

I was fourteen, banging on the church doors at two o’clock in the morning wanting desperately to have a priest hear my confession. I couldn’t take it any longer. I was afraid I would die in the night and be condemned to eternal hell for doing the things the tragic couple in Father O’Brien's Sunday sermon had done. That Sunday at mass he had told us what had happened to two teenagers in his previous parish who had gone on a drive up the mountains to do ‘shameful’ things. While they were engrossed in petting and kissing, and other things which he left deliberately vague, the hand-break had worked itself loose and the car rolled down the mountain side, killing the young people instantly. When their bodies were found, to the shock of their parents, they were in various states of undress. Father O’Brien had said that their death had come so suddenly that they didn’t even have time to make an act of contrition, and now their souls are in perpetual agony.

The doors of the church had been locked and no one came to hear my confession. I got tired of pounding and became so enraged that I swore that I would never expect anything from the church again. God had closed his heart to me in my hour of need and I would do the same to him forever. I gave the thick wooden door a sound kick, spat on the ground, and because I was so agitated and needed to relieve myself, I squatted down and urinated right there on the church steps. I never went to confession again, and to my mother's profound distress, I decided to sleep late every Sunday and skip mass altogether.

When I recounted this event to Clara, she said that I was lucky that no priest had been there to open the church door. For, to confess and throw oneself on the mercy of a priest or God, himself, in a moment of weakness was the worst thing anyone could do. She said that contrary to what I might have thought at the time, power had not deserted me after all, because by urinating on the church steps I broke my ties with the church forever. She had assured me that urinating is one of the best ways sorcerers have of severing their connections with things.

"I too had an awful time disassociating myself from the Church," she had revealed. "I used to look forward to Sunday mass so I could meet with friends. Then I would go to their houses and eat and gossip all afternoon. That was the only enjoyment I had in my life, so I clung to it like there's no tomorrow."

"How did you break that habit?" I asked.

"My teacher, the *nagual* Julian, had me collect all my piss in jars for days. Then, late one night, I had to go to the church of my home town and when no one was around I had to till all the holy water basins with urine and also the baptismal fount. Then I had to go up to the altar and fill the chalices and add some piss to the incense dispenser. Imagine the next morning, for he had me go on a Saturday, the surprise of the priest and parishioners when they blessed themselves with my piss. I didn't see the humor of it at the time, because I was frightened to death and felt guilty for years afterward over committing holy sacrilege, but the *nagual* Julian, said that that is exactly what we do, we try to bless ourselves and become holy using someone else's piss as if it were sacred. Years later I saw the irony of it and the touch of genius in the *nagual*'s *stalker's* plan. You, on the other hand, had followed no plan; you simply went there to relieve yourself and the spirit took care of the rest, without you even knowing it."

As we drove in an uneasy silence, I breathed in the memories and softly exhaled them. Several hours later we arrived at the city of Los Moches. We stopped at a modern all-night diner to eat. I was ravenous. My legs were itching terribly out of guilt, tension and lack of sleep. I almost wished I had not left Catalina's potion in her house. Yet I had been told never to accept food or

drink from anyone, and certainly not medicine. Who could say what that lotion contained or might have done to me after la Catalina's wrathful outburst.

We ordered bacon and eggs in the well-lit coffee shop. Carlos seemed tired, but I was relieved to see that he too was ravenous. Somehow, we still had our appetites, so things could not have been totally out of control, During the meal I kept reaching down to scratch my legs because my Levi's rubbed against the bites, making them itch all the more.

"I know a pharmacy in this town," Carlos said, noticing my discomfort. "When they open in the morning, we'll go there. There is also a curer who works in the herb market..."

I couldn't believe my ears. "Not another curer," I said adamantly. "I simply refuse to go."

"No, this is different," Carlos assured me. "He's an herbalist. He has studied pharmacology and medicinal plants. He's very knowledgeable. Besides, it's a good idea to cancel out the powerful effect Catalina had on you."

This was the first time since leaving Sonora that Carlos had mention the sorceress's name. I thought that perhaps we had put enough distance between us to neutralize the pull of her power.

"Alright, if you think it's a good idea," I said, rubbing my calf against the table leg. "How did la Catalina get to be so powerful?" I asked.

"Every morning before dawn she walks five miles to a hilltop and stands there naked to absorb the energy of the earth and wind," he replied.

"How do you know that?" I asked. "Have you seen her naked?"

Carlos laughed uneasily. "No. Don Juan told me. She is like a cousin to his line. Although, as I said, she really belongs with the *nagual* Julian's party."

"Why didn't she go with them when they left the world?"

"She wasn't ready. She still wanted to do things in the world, I suppose."

We checked into a motel and I spent the rest of the night in a fitful sleep. I felt that there was a hoard of people in the room. If I opened my eyes quickly, I could see some of them standing next to my bed, for they couldn't vanish fast enough, and I could certainly hear them

whispering. Don Juan was there, and two other men; all three of them were wearing suits. I sensed their presence and their bulk but I could not make out their faces, although I thought one of them was the man Catalina had called her "protector."

At one point in my sleep, I was curled up on my left side, shivering like a dog from the cold. One of the men was poking me with a walking stick to see if I would awake. I felt and could see and hear what they were doing, but I could not move. I decided to feign sleep so I could eavesdrop on what they were saying, for I knew they were whispering about me.

"She's still stuck on what happened in high school," don Juan said, annoyed.

"She can't stop indulging," another one said.

"Idiot," the man that was poking me said. "That's what a Catholic upbringing will do. There is no end to her self-pity. It wasn't as though she gave herself to Father O'Brien."

"In her mind she did," someone said in a pathetic tone that made everyone laugh.

I must have made some sort of movement, because someone asked, "do you suppose she can hear us?"

"I wouldn't put it past Taisha," don Juan replied. "She's pretty sneaky. Let's talk to her; maybe we can pour some sense into her."

Then they started talking to me and telling me things; what to do to straighten out my life; how important it was to let go of the past and not cling to memories; and things about the *recapitulation*, which they said was a never-ending process, I sensed their strength and fairness and I felt safe in their presence, Don Juan was so indifferent and non-judgmental that I was relieved. I knew that if someone so noble didn't give a hoot about what I was or did, that it couldn't be that bad. They must be right, I was only indulging.

They told me many things, about myself and about Carlos and of things to come, but I knew I would not be able to remember even a fraction of what they had said, and then someone did something that I would remember always. He began to sing a song. It was a song about saying goodbye and leaving memories behind, even the happy ones that made our hearts laugh. The song was so strange, because it recounted specific moments I had lived. It was as if that song was tailor made for my life and the words described what I was feeling in the deepest part of me.

Of course, I began to cry, not because it was a sad song, but because it was about me. It was a song of making peace with one's heart and with lost youth. It was a song of liberation, beautiful and strong for it captured the essence of the moment. It summed up the temporariness of life. Listening to it, I felt purged and a deep sense of gratitude and love welled up for those who were helping me for no reason at ail. That simple tune had reached places no words could have touched.

The next morning I remembered what had happened in the room the night before, I wanted to write down everything so that I could later make sense out of it, and follow the advice they had given me, but all I could recapture was the essence of some of the things they told me, and, of course, the song which was still in my mind weaving it's melodic spell.

After breakfast, we drove to the center of town, parked the car near the plaza and walked to the marketplace.

"This person has a stall in the market where he sells medicinal herbs," Carlos said. "I think it's in this aisle if I'm not mistaken,"

We walked passed the rows of fruit vendors and a stand that sold poultry. Chickens were hanging upside down with their heads chopped off and blood was dripping into a pan below. I became queasy. It was not a pleasant sight to see so soon after breakfast.

Carlos make some inquiries as to whether the man we were looking for was there that day. A stocky woman with a red ribbon braided into her two long plaits, pointed to a stand at the end of the row. It was more than a stand; it was almost a small consultation room, portioned off by plywood and curtains. There was a sign on the curtain, saying "the doctor is out."

"The curer will be back shortly," said a thin gaunt youth who was the curer's assistant.

He led us behind the curtain and asked me to sit down on a crate. A hot breeze came thorough the opening of the fabric making the windowless quarters even stuffier. The cement floor was swept clean and there was an altar with wilted flowers and a statue of the virgin and some drooping candles. A trunk was the only bulky piece in the area, other than the crates and a chair. On it the curer had laid out his paraphernalia. Stacked against one wall were dried herbs tied together with pieces of red yarn. I didn't recognize any of the herbs, except for the angelica which I had gone to find in a stream bed with don Juan. Next to the dried herbs was a granite mortar and pestle for grinding medicines to a powder. A row of neatly labeled jars with different powdered herbs, others in roots form, and still others in leaves, lined the wall.

I shifted my position on the Pepsi Cola crate, or rather leaned over to watch the flickering flame of the candles that the assistant had lit on the shrine. My legs itched madly and it was all I could do to keep from scratching them. Carlos had bought me a pair of white cotton mittens to wear so that if I did scratch, I would not draw blood and scar my legs. I took the mittens from my pocket and put them on just in case I had a fit of itching I could not control. I looked like I had white cat's paws.

"I'll go see if I can find the curer," Carlos said.

I insisted that he stay with me and not wander off like he did at doña Catalina's house. As we discussed this, the curtain opened and a stooped woman supporting herself on a crooked cane stepped into the inner room. It was all she could do to walk. The assistant greeted her warmly and helped her to the sole chair that Carlos had vacated.

"Is she the curer?" I asked Carlos in dismay.

Carlos shook his head. "I don't think so. She must be one of his patients."

But the assistant introduced her to us as the curer's wife. She kept raving about her husband's powers, saying that he had cured her son's shoulder which he had dislocated while digging an irrigation ditch.

"Why doesn't he cure her?" I whispered to Carlos? "She seems to be on her last leg."

The old woman smacked her lips and looked me up and down in disapproval. I sensed she distinctly disliked Americans with their soft, cushioned ways. I wasn't about to antagonize anyone after the experience with doña Catalina, so I said "buenos dias," and smiled as graciously as I could.

She nodded and said "buenos dias," but did not smile.

The curer must be ancient if that is his wife, I thought. Just then, a sprite man, perhaps in his late forties, entered through the curtain. He was tall for a Mexican, lean, and he exuded a sort of wiry vitality. He had a pointed well trimmed beard giving me the impression of a Spanish gentleman on leave from his hacienda, and like the Spaniards, his skin was light. His eyes were friendly and he had well marked laugh lines around his eyes and mouth giving him a mischievous appearance. He was dressed in charcoal trousers and a white tunic-like shirt with embroidery down the front that, with a little imagination, could pass for a doctor's smock.

Carlos, the curer, don Vicente, and his assistant chatted amicably in Spanish for a while as his wife, who looked more like his mother or even his grandmother, looked on in silence. Then the curer ceremoniously bowed and formally asked us permission to begin practicing his healing art. He was such a gentleman that I instinctively trusted him. His assistant had told us earlier, while his wife was informing us of his prowess, that he could diagnose illness by evaluating the color and shape of a person's energy that surrounds his body.

The curer started by staring at me as if assessing the state of my energy. I was worried about what he might see, especially after the clash with la Catalina. I would have hidden all the bad things if I could, including the foreign luminous worms, but how could one hide what was already invisible? The curer became foggy eyed and a bit groggy and he seemed to be looking right through me so there was no place to hide. I didn't like the way he was shaking his head in dismay. After an uneasy interval, he opened his eyes wider and with a frown whispered something to Carlos in Spanish.

"He believes it is a case of bewitchment," said Carlos.

"Witchcraft! I knew it. But he hasn't even looked at the flea bites yet." I began to roll up my pant legs.

The curer glanced at the red swollen bites and nodded as he repeated what he had said before, "Embrujamiento."

"Now he's certain it's witchcraft," Carlos said.

The old woman in the corner nodded in agreement.

"But doesn't witchcraft have to be done by an enemy?" I asked. "I don't have any enemies in Mexico, except maybe for Catalina, but I had the bites before I had the run in with her. So I know she didn't cause them."

"He thinks a jealous woman put the hex on you," said Carlos.

"I don't know any jealous women," I said, except for myself, I couldn't help thinking.

Don Vicente examined the bites carefully then took two white candles and ran them sideways up and down along my calves. He periodically shook the candles in the air as if to cast off the poison that the candles had attracted to them. Then he got a flask of yellowish liquid from the shrine, which he said was holy water, and sprinkled it on my legs. I cringed as if I were Satan

himself, for I remembered Clara's story about urinating in the holy water founts in the church. I was certain that the liquid was the curer's own urine.

Then the assistant took from the top of the chest a rattle with a long handle and gave it to the curer who shook it vigorously all around my body. With eyes closed, don Vicente hummed a monotonous chant as he kept shaking the rattle as if to ward off evil spirits. The sound of the rattle made me remember the girl whom I had seen in the Yaqui store, the day we had bought our hats and the Pascola masks. I saw again the look of contempt the girl had given me while I was sitting in the front seat of the car, but I had already gotten bit, how could she have caused it? I was thinking of the possibilities of illnesses caused by the evil eye, when don Vicente interrupted my thoughts.

"Someone wants you to be as miserable as can be," he said. "They may not have caused the bites, but they are certainly keeping them from healing."

I wondered if Don Vicente's sinister diagnosis was correct. I had heard witchcraft discussed in my anthropology courses, but I had always thought that curses and the evil eye were concepts primitive people used to explain the world of cause and effect because they were somehow lacking in rationality or logical thought. Could someone's ill feelings really affect another person physically? After meeting la Catalina, I was certain of it.

I caught myself. It was all too easy to blame others for one's own carelessness or ill fortune. Was my discomfort really something a jealous woman had wished upon me or was it something I had brought upon myself. To see cause and effect on a supernatural plane, which could not be refuted, seemed to me an easy way to explain anything. I decided that the fleas had bitten me simply because my legs were there and uncovered. Yet the more I thought of the other people sitting in the same room, some wearing skirts with their legs also uncovered, I realized none of them had gotten bit. They were exposed to the same dirt floor, the same fleas; and it was true, the fleas had descend on me with a particular vengeance.

"What can I do about it?" I asked concerned, I hoped I would not have to kill a chicken or drink the blood of a goat or something of that nature.

Don Vicente put down the rattle and searched through his trunk. He brought out an amulet, on a string, made of a small seed that looked strangely like. an eye. He said I needed to wear it around my neck for nine days, then the swelling and itching would be gone. The amulet called "eye of the deer" would counteract the force of the venom sent by the evil wisher, whom he said I had had contact with. The curer also gave me a holy card of Saint George, slaying a dragon which I was to place under my pillow while I slept.

I put the holy card in my pocket and rolled down my pant legs. I decided to follow don Vicente's instructions to the letter, even though I knew that the dragon slayer had not been a real saint at all, because according to the Catholic Church, Saint George had never officially existed and neither had dragons. I realized that what was superstition in one culture was reality in another. Besides, what did I know about the supernatural world and it's ramifications? I was trapped in ordinary life thinking of myself, with no hope of escaping, unless something drastic happened.

We stepped out of the curtained off area which had been a sanctuary apart from the world, and entered the hustle and bustle of the market place. Don Vicente addressed Carlos in private in friendly tones. From time to time he glanced at me and chuckled. I wondered if he was telling him more about the evil eye and what to do to counteract it.

His wife had followed us through the curtain and was slowly walking away, stopping to browse at several of the stalls. I noticed then something strange. She was no longer stooped over, and she had lost her limp and had abandoned her cane. From where I stood she seemed like a young woman with an exquisitely straight back. I wanted to follow her around the market place to see what she was up to and how she had accomplished her remarkable metamorphosis, but Carlos came up to me and said it was time to go. I thanked don Vicente and we left.

"What did the curer say to you?" I asked as we stopped to buy some short stubby bananas at a stall outside the main market.

Carlos hesitated for a moment then said, "Don Vicente thinks you're a bit crazy and that's why you're so susceptible to witchcraft."

"What makes him think that?" I asked.

"He could tell from his *seeing* that your energy field is erratic. Something in you was hopping all over the place."

"How could he tell?"

"He could *see* it in your eyes."

Carlos peered at my eyes as if to see if what don Vicente had said was true. "He also said that if you don't do something about your indulging soon, your heath will be impaired. Then it will be

difficult to cure you."

"Well, if it's a question of internal balance," I said. "I'm a hopeless case. I just saw his wife walk away without a trace of a limp; and her back was completely straight. She wasn't even using her cane."

"What?"

"I said, his wife, when she walked down the isle wasn't limping. And she wasn't stooped at all."

"I think you're beginning to see things," Carlos said with a nervous laugh. "Either that, or don Vicente is right. Someone has bewitched you."

Chapter 17: Saying Goodbye

We continued hiking on trail that wound mostly downhill. The loose gravely rock made walking difficult and I had to be extremely careful not to slide. More than once I lost my footing on shale that turned into a small landslide, and I landed on my rear end. Instead of helping me up, Nelida scolded me for being clumsy. We came to a hut hidden in the underbrush. I expressed bewilderment that anyone would live in the desert so far from the nearest town.

"By now you ought to know that sorcerers' houses are found where one least expected them," she said.

"You mean sorcerers live here?" I said stopping in my tracks.

"They do. We'll spend the night here and hike back early the next morning. Tomorrow our three day interlude will be over."

I began rubbing my eyes and I told her that I cherished my time with her and did not want it to come to an end.

"Don't indulge in sentimentality. You know that it's in the nature of things to come to an end. Fortunately we already said goodbye."

I assured her that I never said any such thing.

“To cling is indulging,” she said firmly and walked to the door of the hut. “You’re riding on the sorcerer’s power now, but when you return to Los Angeles, you’ll have to rely on your own power. Therefore, you must behave impeccably or else the bird of freedom will fly away and you will be left feeling sorry for yourself under the tree.”

Nelida's words gave me a sobering jolt. The thought that the spirit would fly away and I would never see her again was more frightening than anything I could imagine.

We entered the adobe hut; it was cool inside. The single room was sparsely furnished. Only a mattress with a folded blanket and a carved wooden trunk lined the walls. A table and two orange crates set on their sides were in the center of the room. Nelida sat on the mattress and brought her knees to her chest and folded her arms around them, a position she had taught me to assume whenever I wanted to relax. The bent legs covered the energy centers along the front of the body and prevented energy from dissipating through agitation.

“We are in the hands of power and we must humbly accept what it offers us,” she continued in a gentler tone. “We control nothing and must not cling, for in the circular course of things, the end is always one with the beginning.”

“But how do we know when the end will come, or if there will be another beginning?” I asked.

Nelida straightened her long legs and looked at me squarely.

“You prepare for the end by always saying goodbye at the beginning. You do this naturally, with as much flair and affection as if you were say hello.”

Something was forming in my thoughts. I saw what was coming, yet there was no power on earth to avert it. If I kept talking perhaps there was something I could hold on to after she was gone, if only her words. I told her that I didn’t understand how one could always be saying goodbye, when one didn’t know when one was leaving.

“But don’t you see, Taisha? You are leaving all the time. Every moment you are leaving one thing to embrace something else. The very act of going to something new means that you are saying farewell to that which you have left behind. If you never say your peace and voice you’re thanks, if you continually cling to what has passed, how can you ever have the energy to accept the marvelous present?”

“What exactly do you mean by clinging?” I asked doggedly, following her to the table.

Nelida explained that clinging was both a mental attitude and a physical sensation. Mentally, one is drawn back, again and again to something that is no longer in one's immediate surroundings. Physically, one becomes constricted, as one holds onto ideas or memories that are illusory. Both mental and physical constrictions reinforce each other, so that one is unable to open willingly and accept fully the new challenges that continually present themselves.

"If you cling, you are plagued with a sense of loss and longing," Nelida remarked sitting down on one of the orange crates. "So you always feel unfulfilled. It would be much wiser not to cling, but to simply let go. Then you won't feel that you have lost anything, for you have already made full use of whatever it was that left. My advice is to never hold on to anything beyond it's time or your time."

Nelida explained that saying goodbye at the same time as saying hello, is the *stalker's* art of recognizing and accepting life's impermanence.

"Nothing ever remains the same, but constant change should not effect a seasoned *stalker*, for when change comes he or she is ready."

"How can we be ready for change when we don't know what will happen next or where it will happen?"

Nelida grabbed my hand that was rubbing my eyes. Slapping it as one would slap a child, she said I must not rub in my agitation but allow the energy in my eyes to flow out freely.

"As *stalkers*, we are ready for change," Nelida continued in an even tone, "because we accept our fate, which is to evolve. We are able to shift our awareness easily and smoothly to match the events that are shifting around us. By being one with the moment, a *stalker* does not notice the change, and never feels a loss. Thus, our lives are always full and yet remain forever an open-ended question mark."

"I would feel more secure if our lives were contained in closed brackets," I mumbled.

"That is because you have grown accustomed to your prison bars. But when your life is a constant question mark, there is no telling what you are capable of doing. Perhaps, even escaping the ultimate exclamation point: our death!"

"What if you love someone or want something you can't have?" I argued. "Then you are bound to feel disappointed or cheated."

Nelida shook her head.

“You never want anything you can’t have,” she replied. “Just as you never want anything you can have. By *recapitulting* your life and practicing *not-doing*, you change your attitude, and by that I mean, your mind becomes fluid so you cling to nothing. Then whatever comes your way is more than enough. Nor do you expect anything to last. Then, whatever withdraws from you, has stayed longer than it's time, but your intrinsic energy never stays or leaves.”

“But you said we will have to leave tomorrow,” I protested. “I might never see you again.”

Nelida stood up and paused at the small window cut into the adobe. “Perhaps you will be gone but I will never have to leave this desert.”

“How can that be?”

“Simply because I was never here.”

I shivered. Nelida said this with such certainty that even if I wanted to doubt her, I couldn’t. Impulsively I embraced her. She was solid and yet indescribably empty to the touch. When I closed my eyes, I could no longer feel her. I realized then, that her presence in the room depended on visual and auditory clues that were, to a large extend, based on my memory of her, rather than on her actual existence. That thought gave me a jolt of genuine fright. Instinctively, I moved backwards a few steps.

“To be here and not here at the same time is what sorcerers mean by *stalking* with the *double*,” Nelida said. “It means that being is no more real than *not-being*.”

“There you go again, talking in riddles again,” I said, afraid she would vanish at any moment.

She looked at me as if impatient with my inability to understand.

“It means,” she continued when she saw in my face genuine confusion, “that not being here is as real as being here. The fact that this desert or this hut is something that surrounds me, something that I love profoundly, cannot be denied, but if another scene surrounds me, I will love it as deeply, for the feeling of affection is inside me, and only in the scene for as long as I choose to place it here.”

She looked at me solemnly. “It’s true, I take my *awareness* and *energy* with me wherever I

go," she said. "I leave nothing behind. You, on the other hand, leave everything behind like a comet. Anyone can follow your trail. I call that lousy *stalking*."

"How can you not be and yet still feel affection?" I asked.

"That is the riddle of the heart that takes *stalkers* a lifetime to unravel," she said. "Someday you will understand it."

She took two china cups from a shelf and set them on the table along with a teapot. I was surprised to see that they were made of exquisitely fine porcelain, so out of place in an adobe shack. Their unexpected presence gave me a true jolt and I imagined for a moment that Nelida had plucked them out of the air, for I had not noticed them on the shelf, upon entering the room.

On a portable kerosene stove she set water to boil. As she prepared tea, I lifted up one of the cups to examine it. The blue and while porcelain was delicately shaped with a willow pattern design. I wondered if the tea set was an antique from the Ming Dynasty, in which case, it was priceless. "So much for sorcerers not being interested in personal possessions," I thought. Nelida answered my unvoiced question, saying she had acquired the tea set during her travels in the Orient. She added that it really didn't matter how valuable it was or how old it was because for her it was always here and always now.

Nelida filled my cup with tea with aromatic blossoms in it.

"This cup that was empty moments before, is now filled with tea," she said as she put down the pot, "or you can fill it with whatever substance you chose, but the cup is the same no matter what it contains, don't you agree?"

I nodded and waited for her to clarify her point.

Nelida explained that once a person has *recapitulated* and has acquired detachment, their *energy body* no longer shivers every time the world moves around them. Because they are empty and allow *intent* to move them, they have a center that is constant and seemingly does not move at all.

"Didn't anyone teach you about maintaining the center?" she asked, surprised.

I told her that Clara and Emilito had taught me many things including how to maintain one's equilibrium while climbing trees in order not to get dizzy or nauseous when hanging upside

down. By focusing the gaze on a specific point, it appears as if the world is moving while the body remains stationary.

Nelida nodded when I had finished describing to her some of Emilito's tree climbing precepts. She picked up her cup and took a sip. "Because the cup has no cracks, it can hold anything at all. You can empty it, or fill it and it is still the same cup. But if it had a crack in it, then you would noticed the tea dripping out little by little until it was gone. Then, the cup, if it could feel, would sense that it had lost something."

I agreed that if it were in the nature of a cup to feel, that because of the crack and the tea tricking out, the cup would experience a sense of loss and might even feel unhappy, unfulfilled or nostalgic about the past.

"That is because the cup is cracked," she said, peering at me, "but if you seal the crack, then when the cup is filled and emptied, it would not sense a loss because it is the nature of a cup to be empty or full. While it is not in the nature of a functional cup to be cracked or broken. A cup that has a hole or no bottom can no longer function for what it was intended, that is, to be a container."

"I still don't understand what that has to do with anything?"

Nelida explained that if the *energy body* has holes in it or is injured, the person feels the drainage of the life force and tries to hold back the inevitable loss by hoarding and clinging. What a person doesn't realize is that it is not the fear of losing that makes him cling but the weakness of his energetic being that is the cause of his turmoil.

Nelida explained that all of us were like cups, some with cracks others with no bottoms, while still others were strong and intact.

"The strong ones never cling or feel a loss when things leave them," Nelida said, "because regardless of whether they are empty or full their essential nature remains intact. Such people can come and go without the burdensome attitudes of the weak, who cling to every crumb that comes their way, always fearing that someone might take it away. They are like beggars who scramble for crumbs because they feel they will never eat again."

"What can you do if you are a cup with a crack?" I asked. "Is there any hope for needy beggars?"

"Recapitulate! Do the *sorcery passes*. Empty and restore your energy. Forget about the tea and

the water, the fruit juice that you can't hold. Don't try to become filled again and again; it will only seep out and exacerbate your sense of loss. Dedicate all your energy to revitalization, Then, when you are strong again, it won't matter whether you are holding grapefruit juice or water. You can be empty or full, but you are never possessive about anything or afraid to let go."

"Why are you no longer possessive?" I asked feeling intoxicated from the aromatic tea.

"Because you know that it is not what fills you that is important, but your link with *intent*. Practice *not-doing*, empty your cup to seal it. Once it is energetically sealed, then you'll know nothing is lacking."

Nelida explained that to be needy or greedy really means that one is energetically dependent on others for sustenance. Therefore, one is always at the mercy of someone else or begging for energetic handouts.

"But if you dip your cup into the vastness, then nothing can disturb or disappoint you. For then you are soaked in the source of all things. Then a person is never afraid of saying goodbye for he or she knows that ultimately there is nothing to leave and no place to go.""What about the saucers?" I asked.

Nelida laughed heartily as if I had said something hilariously funny.

"Toss them out!" she smiled. "We have no use for saucers. It is better to rest upon the vastness itself."

Nelida set her cup on the table and explained that to rest on the vastness, means to forget oneself so completely that there is no difference between oneself and one surroundings. Then the world conforms to our *intent*. When we take no notice of ourselves, then our timing is perfect; then we no longer know whether we are moving or being moved. Then the unfathomable guides and guards our being.

"But first we must rely on our *impeccability*," Nelida said. "Empty your cup though the *recapitulation* so you won't have the sensation of draining and losing. Then while you are empty you repair the damages to your *energy body* through the sorcery passes, finally, after you are energetically sound, and you are clear and at ease with yourself and others, then you can begin to spread that ease and clarity to all your enterprises and encounters. No matter what arises, a *stalker* will be able to handle it with the ease and delight that springs from the depth of *not-being*."

“What if the people I’m with are nervous and unhappy?” I asked, carefully setting my cup down on the table, Nelida filled it with more of the delicious tea. “Wouldn’t I be contaminated by their negative moods?” I was thinking of an incident that happened not long ago in the anthropology department.

I was riding up the elevator when Tim Howard, a graduate student corralled me and in an aggressive manner asked: “how come you’re always smiling? Did you discover the source of happiness?”

I became flustered. Immediately I began explaining that I didn’t realize I was always smiling, and demanded to know how feeling happy could be offensive, but by the time we got to the third floor, I was thoroughly depressed and depleted of energy.

“If you exude ease and delight from the depth of your being, you will contaminate others,” Nelida assured me.

“What if they are so strong that they sway me?” I insisted.

“There is no way anyone can affect a *stalker* because his warrior’s purpose cannot be swayed. Now, if you are cracked, or are on the look out to be liked or are investing and expecting payoffs, then everything seeps out or in and can affect you. As in the elevator, all your energy moves to the place of the damage to repair it but to no avail, for you cannot hold or change anything; nor can you seal anything when your are so full of yourself, but a complete nature holds itself within itself. It needs nothing added to it, nor can anything be taken away from it. Not even the feelings of acquiring or losing.”

Nelida reached across the table to affectionately pat my hand. She assured me that after *recapitulating* my *energy body* was fairly strong and that was why she could talk to me. It was wrong for me to persist in feeling weak merely out of habit.

“A person who is united with *intent* itself, enjoys the company of others but never clings or is needy, simply because her emptiness and fullness prevents her from knowing need or tenacity.”

Nelida explained that to fortify one’s *energy body* entails changing one’s behavior, and giving up the feelings of desperation that serve no purpose.

“Where does one begin?” I asked feeling overwhelmed.

Nelida smiled and said that the best way to consolidate one's *energy body* was through the *recapitulation*, resulting in a cleansing of the turmoil associated with daily existence.

"It is the dissolution of conflict and inner turmoil that puts the personal self to rest," Nelida said. "It results in merging of one's inner and outer worlds, so that what one thinks and does and says are the same as what happens."

It was getting dark. Nelida got up and pointed to the bed. "Have a good rest. I am going for a short walk. Adios."

"You mean 'hasta luego,' don't you?" I said.

Nelida stood for a moment and smiled. Then stepped out and closed the door behind her.

When I awoke the next morning, Don Juan was standing in doorway peering at me. He said to get up for it was time to leave. We climbed down the canyon by a different trail and hiked back to his house. As we walked I was filled with a vibrant energy. I felt open, porous, and light.

I wanted to ask him where Nelida had gone and to tell him all the things she had said and what had happened at the ruins, when he stopped me with a flick of his hand. Suddenly, I couldn't put my recollections into words. I knew some things could never be forced into words and had to remain at the level of *silent knowledge*.

Carlos was waiting when we arrived at don Juan's house. My heart leapt with relief at seeing him again. It had only been three days, but it seemed to have been forever. He did not ask where I had been. It was the riddle of the heart that Nelida had said I would take a lifetime to unravel. Looking into the new *nagual*'s bright shiny eyes, I knew then it had to do with letting go of the self, and of accepting the gifts the *spirit* offered without question, without interfering.

Chapter 18: Guadalajara

Carlos drove south on the Pan-American highway; he kept his eyes on the road and did not relax his concentration at all during the long hours of driving. I offered to relieve him at the wheel, but he refused, saying that it was dangerous for the inexperienced driver to negotiate

the curves on Mexican roads, and we needed to get to a large city as fast as safety would allow.

As we drove, I had the feeling someone or something was following us, hovering outside on the passenger side. That feeling had made me so anxious that I had to struggle to keep my eyes open. I kept drifting off into a light sleep and found myself back in the Sonoran Desert floating over the chaparral. I could see rows of enormous agave cactus and clusters of tall saguaro, and the long brown lines of irrigation ditches. I knew something was wrong; I felt vaporous, as if I had no substance, or that the bulk of me was somewhere else.

When I was awake, I was disoriented; I couldn't think and could hardly formulate a coherent answer to Carlos's questions. He was asking me about my studies, what courses I planned to take in the fall. That world was so distant that I couldn't remember the course titles, the professor's names, or people I had had contact with at the University. I was tripping over my words as if I were drunk or had a speech impediment.

"You sound like my Turkish grandmother," Carlos said. "She would always mix up her p's and b's and twist words around. I used to be ashamed of her because I thought she had a heavy accent, but later I realized that she had aphasia."

"Well, I don't have aphasia," I said annoyed. "I just can't seem to focus my thoughts."

Carlos turned off onto a shoulder of the road, stopped the car and examined my pupils. He concluded that La Catalina had gotten a strong hold over me and that she wasn't about to let go.

"What does she want with us?" I asked, my teeth chattering from an inner chill.

"Your sudden visit and suspicious behavior was interpreted as an attempt to snatch her power," Carlos said. "She acted in the only way she knew how to defend herself from an inexplicable force."

Carlos reiterated that we had to put even greater distance between us, and quickly too, for we had offended La Catalina by not making it plain who we were and why we had come to see her.

"Why would she want to hurt us if she is part of don Juan's group of sorcerers?" I asked.

"It's not a question of what la Catalina wants," Carlos explained, "but once certain forces are set into motion, there is nothing she can do to retract them. It is like the *recapitulation*. Once your *intent* and breath are sent out, whoever happens to be in it's path is done for."

“Do you think she might retaliate against her will?”

Carlos started the car again. “There’s no way of know what she might do,” he said. “Therefore we must continue our journey and rally our power.”

When I asked Carlos how far south we were fleeing, he said we would keep driving until we ran out of power, or until something told us to stop. I had the gnawing suspicion that I had already run out of power. From the time of the gathering in the house in Sonora where the fleas had attacked me, to the encounter with la Catalina, things had not turned out well, I rationalized these ill fated outcomes, as a result of not having been adequately prepared as to who these people were, or what I was to expect. Had I been better informed, I would have handled the encounters with more finesse. Yet at the same time, I knew that in the sorcerer’s world the test of a warrior’s metal always came disguised, to see if one could act impeccably without warning or preparation, but simply from an inner conviction.

It was late afternoon by the time we reached Guadalajara. Carlos parked the car near the Hotel de Mendoza, near the long park-like plaza Tapatia. We got out and walked to an area where there was a gazebo set on a raised platform with steps leading up to it that served as a stage. An orchestra had assembled; the musicians seemed to be preparing to play, for they were warming up their violins and trumpets. A good sized crowd had gathered to hear the concert and to stroll along the walkways of the park.

Massive Colonial style buildings surrounded the park. To the west was the Degollado Theater, the home of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Jalisco. Further on we could see parts of the government palace. Streets veered off in various directions from the central plaza. To my left was an enormous building with carved wooden doors opening to a series of steps. It seemed to be a government building of some kind with a statue of a man riding a horse in front of a fountain. Carlos wanted to head for the statue.

“Can we stay to listen to the concert?” I asked.

Carlos nodded. We looked for a bench where we could sit and listen to the music, but they were all occupied by families and young couples. I realized we were not in the best spot to listen to the orchestra. The place was packed with old men with walking sticks, grandmothers looking after boisterous children, and young women who were parading before the appreciative stares of young men.

The paths were crowded too with vendors selling balloons, artificial flowers, and pinwheels.

Other stands and carts were selling cotton candy, fruit, ice cream, and all kinds of wares, including canaries in small cages. We stood for a while waiting for the orchestra to begin. In the distance I could see the twin towers of the cathedral. It was a striking mixture of Byzantine, Gothic and Arabic styles. Carlos said that the 200 foot towers were erected in l848, after an earthquake had destroyed the original structures. The towers were beautifully decorated with yellow and blue tiles that glistened in the afternoon sun.

In the opposite direction, across the park, east according to my compass, there were three story houses with bars covering the windows. Flowering geranium pots and other plants graced the second story balconies accessed by beautiful french doors opening out to them. One house in particular caught my attention. It's shutters were freshly painted blue. It seemed to exude vitality from every stone. Compared to it, the other houses seemed drab and old.

“The orchestra is about to start playing,” Carlos said taking my arm. “Shall we walk around the plaza to find a better spot?”

We began to stroll, but I grew more and more uneasy, I had the unsettling sensation that I was being followed or that someone I couldn’t see was watching me. I grew self conscious, irritable, for I knew whoever it was was scrutinizing me at a deep level. I had all but forgotten la Catalina in the excitement of the park, but this was something else having nothing to do with la Catalina’s reprisals.

I looked at the people seated or the ones standing on the benches so they could see the musicians, but I didn’t recognize anyone. I saw children with their mothers, teenagers out on dates, an elderly woman and a gentleman. Then there was a strong and attractive middle aged woman, carrying a mesh shopping bag full of parcels, I saw nothing out of the ordinary.

The band had begun playing. They sounded our of tune. They were playing the Vienna Waltz by Strauss, which had been one of my mother’s favorite piece. She had played it over and over on the piano so that it had become ingrained in my memory. I was mulling over as to how it ought to be played when a man approached Carlos and began talking to him. At first I didn’t pay any attention, for I was engrossed in finding fault with the musicians. but when I turned and saw the familiar face almost completely hidden by a sombrero, my mouth fell open.

“Emilito!” I cried. “What are you doing here? Is it really you?”

We stood there for a moment staring at each other. Tears came to my eyes for I had thought I would never see him again.

“Indulging as usual,” he said and winked devilishly. “Have you been practicing what I taught you?”

“I haven’t been,” I confessed, “but I am going to the university as you recommended.”

Emilito nodded. He whispered something to Carlos who suddenly excused himself, saying he had an errand to run, but that he would join up with us later. I was so happy to see Emilito that I barely heard what Carlos was saying. I started to follow him as he left, but Emilito grabbed my arm to stop me.

“Let him go, dear. Don’t you like my company?” He sounded actually peeved like a child who was about to be abandoned.

He prodded me in the opposite direction toward another bench, some distance away from the orchestra. I turned to see if I could catch sight of Carlos to ask him not to leave me alone in an unknown city, but he had already disappeared in the crowd.

“You’ll see him later,” Emilito assured me. “Now what about your practice of *stalking* with the *double*?”

“What do you mean?”

“*Stalking* with the *double*,” he repeated with an exasperated click of his tongue. “Have you been practicing it?”

I was at a loss as to what to say. I tried to remember what he had taught me with respect to that subject, but my mind was a mass of confusion. I looked at his wide lemur-like eyes and noted the disappointment in, them. I wanted to say that I understood what he meant and that I was practicing diligently every day, but that would have been dishonest, so I said,”I don’t honestly know if I’ve been *stalking* with the *double*.”

He recommended that I lean back, on the bench, close my eyes and try to remember what he had taught me on that subject.

“Remember how to find things, how to get things done, how to move things with a force stemming from inner silence and beyond?” he suggested.

I closed my eyes and tried to settle my erratic breathing. Then as I drifted off into a restful state, I remembered something that Emilito had said a long ago while I was living in the trees

under his care. I had complained that since I could not leave the tree-house, which had been our agreement, I was unable to practice the martial art forms Clara had taught me. For that I needed plenty of space and preferably a hard wood floor.

“Practice martial arts with your *double*,” Emilito had recommended. “That’s the best sort of practice anyway.”

“How do I practice martial arts with my *double* when I can’t even leave the tree house?” I ashed.

Emilito had laughed and to my amazement had executed a series of the most graceful and impossible bodily movements I had ever seen. Right there beneath the tree-house, Emilito had flipped backwards and then laterally in circles, rotating his body in a horizontal plane like a Frisbee, and I knew he wasn’t using pulleys or ropes, or extra fast film to speed up his movements as they did in martial art movies to give the impression of actors defying gravity. Watching Emilito’s superb movements from the treehouse, was sheer delight. “Why hadn’t he taught me before?” I lamented. Now that I couldn’t leave the trees, it was too late to learn how to spin in the air.

“Practice these movements with your *double*,” he had repeated and again showed me the lateral spinning motion.

“But how do I practice that without falling out of the tree?” I had asked.

“Use your imagination and intend it,” he said. “Intent! Intent! Intent!” he called out in a shrill bird like squawk as he walked toward the house.

That night and all the subsequent nights for several weeks, before falling asleep, I visualized the movements Emilito had demonstrated. I saw myself doing them over and over until I found myself doing them in my dreams. With some practice, my dream body could move any way I willed it to. I found I could do the most elaborate flips and back bends, I could leap from the ground to the tree house and back down again in a single bound, using not pulleys and ropes but the energy from my midsection, and I could do a thing I had always wanted to do, but could never accomplish with my waking body, no matter how hard I stretched, and that was touching my chin to my toes. After that, Emilito would show me movements on a regular basis, which I would then practice first by visualizing them, and then by repeating them over and over until I could do them in my *dreaming*.

I opened my eyes and told Emilito what I had remembered; that while I was in the treehouse, I

practicing long sequences of movements, putting the gravity defying techniques that he had shown me, together in new patterns, so that every night I would dream of doing combinations of movement.

"That's *stalking* with the *double*," Emilito said, pleased. "That's sending out the *double* as a scout to put things in order. Then when you do it, it's a cinch because the energy has already been deployed to produce a certain effect. The rest follows by itself."

I realized that in spite of my reason, that was the way I did practically everything, from practicing martial arts movements, to writing a term paper, or giving a report in a class, or designing a dress, or composing a poem or cooking a stew. Following the pattern I had learned under Emilito's tutelage, I always set up the form at night, in a quiet restful state. I laid the foundation and imagined myself going through the motions of doing that particular thing.

For example, if I were going to make a dress, I would go through all the steps in the exact order I needed to do them. I would see myself selecting the proper material, folding it, cutting it, taking the pieces in their proper order and sewing them together. I would see which way would be better and make changes if I needed to, repeating the sequence in a different order. A voice would tell me if there was a better way of doing it, and when I had it completed, in the most economical and efficient way, whenever I felt it was the proper time, I would allow the activity to unfold to it's completion. It was as if the thing were already done and I was only the agent, silently going through the motions of it's execution.

The same thing would happen if I had to give a report in one of my classes. I would visualize myself writing the paper while in a light sleep. Or rather, I would blank my mind and something would isolate a topic and tell me how to organize it in the most precise and understandable manner. When it was arranged, I would put it down on paper exactly as I had written it with my dream body. I realized that the years of *recapitulation* had enabled me to visualize in detail entire scenes and long sequences with no difficulty at all. Something would tell me what to say or do and I would see and hear myself saying and doing it. Then when it came time to give the report, or do the activity, I proceeded as if it were already completed.

"*Stalking* with the *double* comes in handy when you're gong to school," Emilito said after I had explained to him how I proceeded. "It bypasses thought and goes directly to the source of energy that enables us to act most efficiently."

"I guess I do use *intent*," I said. "If I need to find something, like a specific blouse to match a skirt, say out loud 'I need a blouse,' or 'find me the perfect blouse,' and the force out there puts it in front of me by making me encounter it sometime during the course of events. I don't have

to do anything. It brings it to me."

Emilito said that was the art of *stalking*: to reach the point when one does nothing, but allows the power of *intent* to alter reality so subtly that the intended items appear as elements in one's daily life. It is a harmonious process of changing perception via the force of *intent*, something so mysterious and subtle that it seems as if it comes out of nowhere, Emilito stressed that that force only responds if one is impeccable in one's daily life, and if one has no attachment to things. Feelings of desperation, or clinging or greed or need will thwart the free flowing energy required for *intent* to respond to one's silent bidding.

"You must not be that un-impeccable," Emilito said, "if you can *stalk* with the *double* using the power of *intent*. Or perhaps you are the apple of someone's eye and someone is lending you their power."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Who would be lending me their power? Nelida?"

"I'm not talking about Neilda," Emilito said. "She watches over you, to see that you don't stray from the path. This sounds like something different."

He sniffed the air a couple of times as if trying to determine something. In fact, he sniffed in all directions as if he were smelling something intangible.

"What are you doing, Emilito?" I asked. "Did I forget to put on deodorant this morning?"

"I wouldn't know about that," he said. "I'm interested in determining who is lending you their power."

"Perhaps it's Mr. Abelar, the *nagual* Juan Matus or the new *nagual*, Carlos."

"Juan Matus is your teacher, true," Emilito said. "But he is pretty miserly with his power. He wouldn't lend it for the hell of it, and Carlos is in charge of leading you to freedom, but this smells like something else. Like someone has made you a gift, and you don't even know it."

All of a sudden I was afraid, sensing something that was beyond words. It was so dark, that it came from the darkness itself.

"Someone has been teaching you things at night," Emilito announced like an oracle. "And I know who it must be."

“Who, Emilito? Tell me.”

“It’s not up to me to spill the beans,” he said, “If your true benefactor wants to reveal himself, then so be it. If not, let it remain a secret.”

At the mere mention of the word “secret” I registered a chill. My whole body shivered from the marrow of my bones outward. I experienced what don Juan had called the “warrior’s shiver.” He said it happened when a force moves the ethereal body directly and so powerfully that it is then registered by the physical body.

“Can’t you tell me, who you are referring to, Emilito? Now I’m scared to even go to sleep at night.”

“And you should be,” he said seriously. “Someone has been showing you how to manipulate *intent*, but not merely from the treetops, but from the deepest levels of the beyond.”

“So how come I don’t remember or even know what you’re talking about?” I asked, “and how come I'm still such a shitbird?”

“Because that someone is teaching your *double* directly. Very sneaky. He must come while you’re in a profound sleep. That’s why you don’t remember, and that’s why you can afford to be so indulging. If you had a bit more energy you would be aware and you would know who I’m talking about, because you *double* already knows him intimately.”

“Him? Is it a he?”

I had still thought it might be Nelida, but whenever she comes in my dreams, I am usually aware of her presence. There is nothing secretive about her. On the contrary, she is open and lighthearted, almost to the point of being nurturing in an indifferent sort of way. This other force sounded all too sinister. I didn’t relish the idea that someone or something was manipulating my energy in my sleep, and especially not a male figure.

“Sinister is right!” Emilito said with such an exaggerated warrior’s shiver that his body vibrated from head to toe. It was so comical that, I laughed out of sheer nervousness. “The real mystery is why would he be all that interested in the likes of you?”

“I don’t know what you are talking about,” I said. “Nobody is interested in me. That’s just the trouble. I’m really an inconsequential piece of shit overlooked by everyone.”

I said that with all the self-pity I could muster, for I felt I had been abandoned by Emilito, Nelida, Clara and don Juan.

“Now, now, tree dweller, let’s have none of that self pity crap,” Emilito said with a nudge that almost pushed me off the bench. “No one abandoned you. You have your own path, and it’s not here with us. Whatever we teach you has to be to your dream body or *double*, and you don’t have to be in Mexico for that.”

“Why not?”

“A stupid question,” Emilito said, “because as you know very well, the dream body is not bound by space and time. We can meet anywhere and any time, even the city of the angels.”

The way he said that, had made Los Angeles sound utterly enchanting.

“I know that, Emilito. What I meant was why do you have to teach the *double*? Why can’t you just teach my physical body directly, the way you used to. Why can’t I stay here in Guadalajara with you?”

Emilito gave me mock look of horror. “What do you have in mind?” he said moving to his side of the bench, “and what makes you think I ever taught your physical body? Do you know something that I don’t?”

“No, I don’t mean it like that. I know you’re beyond all that male-female crap, and so am I. I just don’t like being in Los Angeles by myself so far from all of you.”

“You are not by yourself, now that you have met Carlos, the young *nagual*,” Emilito said. “He will look out for you, and the rest of us are always aware of your presence.”

“You mean you *see* me?”

“Of course, we *see* your *energy body*, and we know your inner most thoughts.”

He raised an eyebrow and shook his head, “So you’d better continue *recapitulating*. The stronger your *intent* gets the purer you have to be.”

I told Emilito about something that had been troubling me. I had a part time job in a typing pool while going to school, and every time I parked my car to go to work, a young man, slightly retarded and perhaps homeless would be waiting on the corner asking if he could clean my

windshields for some money. For a while I simply let him clean them and gave him a few dollars in return, but since I drove there four or five times a week, I didn't need my windshield cleaned each time, so I would say, "no thank you." Sometimes, I felt sorry for him and gave him some money anyway. Especially after he had told me he had to be careful about what he ate because he suffered from stomach ulcers.

The thought that he had bleeding ulcers, the way my older brother had as a teenager, made the situation all the more poignant. I wanted to give him all the money I had, yet at the same time I was on a tight student's budget and had to watch what I spent, and I didn't want my windows cleaned so I was at a loss as to what to do. It got to the point that I dreaded driving up to the parking lot of my work, for I did not want to see this person.

To avoid encountering him, I went so far as to park down the street, but he would find me anyway on my way home. He would say, "there's my lady-friend," in such a pleasant tone that made me feel like a rat if I didn't give him any money, and angry if I did. I became so guilty and annoyed with this routine that one day I stopped in my tracks when I was out of sight, and said in a loud voice, "Enough is enough, I don't ever want to see that person again."The next day I was relieved to see that the young man wasn't on the street corner, but I didn't think anything of it expecting to see him there the next day, but I didn't. I though he was on vacation, although where or how I couldn't fathom. After a week of not seeing him, I was afraid he might be ill and felt doubly guilty. As time went on the young man didn't return. In fact, I never saw him again.

When I finished my account, Emilito shook his head. "Now I'm certain that someone has been teaching you to *stalk* with the *double*. Those things don't just happen just like that."

"What do you think happened to that man, Emilito?" I asked feeling alarmed. "Why didn't he ever come back?"

"It makes no difference what happened to him," Emilito said. "He may have gone on vacation the way you would have liked to believe; or he maybe he was hit by a car while washing a windshield; or perhaps he move to a street corner where business was better. Or maybe he died of his ulcers or of malnutrition. Whatever happened to him is not the issue here."

"What are you saying?" I asked. "What is the issue?"

"The fact that you never laid eyes on him again, means that you were capable of altering the flow of *intent*. By voicing your desire, you moved something. Your *intent* moved that young man away from that street corner. How or to what it was moved, makes no difference."

“I didn’t want him to come to any harm,” I protested. “I just didn’t want him to keep bothering me. You yourself said that a *stalker* should never be subject to routines, and giving him money every time I saw him, was a routine.”

“That’s precisely what I’m saying. You were able to disrupt a routine by altering the flow of intent. That is *stalking* with the *double*, and someone has been teaching you how to do that.”

“I still don’t think it had anything to do with me,” I said. “It could have been coincidence. He probably had somewhere else to go.”

“Call it coincidence, witchcraft, sorcery or whatever you like,” Emilito said. “The point is that you never saw the young man again. Who gives a fig what the reason is or what explanation you want to use? Your uneasiness is an indication that you had something to do with it whether you are aware of it or not.”

“Who do you think is teaching me this?” I asked still not convinced.

“I already told you it’s not for me to say,” he replied. “But there is another secret that I can reveal to you, if you follow me.”

“I’d rather wait for Carlos to come back, it it’s all the same to you,” I said, afraid of what Emilito might reveal to me.

The orchestra had stopped playing long ago. Emilito popped up from the bench and said we could not wait for Carlos to return. It was getting dark and he wanted to take me to meet his friend who lived in a house nearby. He pointed to the west and said that if we craned our necks, we could see the house from where we were standing. I could see the corner of a wooden balcony, it was only a bit of railing that showed, and the rest was covered by the adjacent buildings. To my surprise he was pointing to the house behind the one on the corner; the house that had the balcony with flowers, the one I had liked so much upon arriving at the plaza.

“Who lives there?” I asked, “and are you sure Carlos will be there waiting for us?”

“A beautiful lady,” Emilito said, “and I’m absolutely certain Carlos will be there, but will he be waiting for us? I very much doubt it. He’s probably enjoying himself too much.”

He said that with a wolf-like wink that implied all sorts of devilish things. I experienced a wave

of jealousy that was too obvious to hide. Emilito shook his head for he knew he had hit a sore spot. From his chuckle, I could tell he had been deliberately putting my claim to being detached as a woman to the test; I failed miserably.

We walked to the house in silence. He had such a spritely, sure gait that I had to make an effort to keep up with him so I would not get lost in the crowd and end up in an unknown place. Along the way he said that he had something that he wanted to show me, something only for the eyes of the *double* or dream body and that we had to hurry for twilight was the best time to witness such sights.

Chapter 19: The *Energy Body*

Nelida led me to the top of the bluff from where I had seen the ruins. She said it was a place the ancient sorcerers called a twin power spot.

“Why do they call it a power spot?” I asked, stopping to catch my breath. I looked back across the valley. I could see the trail winding along the red rimmed canyon. I was surprised at how much distance we had covered in a short time.

“The ancient sorcerers have imbued the rocks and earth with their intent,” Nelida said. “The columns and the point on the bluff from where you saw the ruins, form an energetic arch that allowed your *energy body* to be pulled away from it's moorings. Returning to that place, will seal your *energy body* and fill it with vitality. However, I wouldn’t recommend spending the night there.”

“Why is that?”

“Because the somber mood of the ancient sorcerers would derail you from your purpose,” Nelida said. “You are somber enough as it is. You don’t need to be pushed over the brink.”

I laughed nervously. I was standing dangerously close to the edge where one false step lead to a sharp drop of hundreds of feet. I saw ominous boulders that seemed to have been lodged below by a torrential flood. Now a stream meandered in an uneven course. It was hard to believe that a river had cut so deeply into the mountainside. Now the stream appeared to be trapped down there with no hope of escape.

Nelida pointed to a flat mesa across the ravine and said, “That is the place over there.”

“It frightens me to go back there,” I told Nelida, moving away from the edge. “Somehow, that place didn’t seem friendly to me.”

Nelida gave me a sideways glance.

“What makes you think that places of power have to be friendly, especially the twin power spots of the ancient sorcerers? All that is needed for a place to be useful is that there is a particular *intent* flowing from the earth.”

We continued to make our way to the area from where I had seen the ruins. My thighs were burning. I had to stop every fifteen steps or so for the climb was decidedly uphill. Nelida had given me a bottle of Pienafiel water which she told me to sip slowly, I had gotten to the last drop and was about to toss the bottle away when she stopped me with a strong grasp on my arm.

“You must act impeccably,” she said. “That means leaving nothing behind.”

I tied the empty bottle to a belt loop of my jeans and we continued walking. When we got to the flat area, Nelida took a series of deep breaths and asked me if I noticed anything particular about the place. I inhaled a few times then told her that the air seemed to be thinner, clearer and more transparent; I was no longer tired.

“You are right,” Nelida said. “The air here is light, not heavy like the air you are accustomed to breathing. This air has been purified through the sorcerers’ *intent* so that only the essence of vitality remains.”

I wasn't prepared to go as far as attributing my renewed well-being to the essence of vitality, but breathing the air did seem to energize me. Nelida urged me to fill my lungs with the life-giving charge. As I breathed, she disclosed that the ancient sorcerers used to practice their *dreaming* here and that they dwelt in the caves that dotted the mountainside.

“Why did they pick this place in particular as their power spot?” I asked.

We sat down on a flat rock that had a slight depression in it, as if the rock had been carved out for sitting. Although, I couldn’t help noticing that whoever had sat there before had larger buttocks.

“There are certain natural cracks in the crust of the earth through which one can slip,” Nelida

said. “The ancient *seers* were experts at finding these cracks and at stepping through them. They handed down this knowledge from generation to generation. We are sitting on one such crack now.”

I jumped up. Nelida laughed and said it was not a geological crack or fault line, but an opening in the earth’s energy crust.

“Were the sorcerers that lived here hermits?” I asked, sitting down again.

“Many of them were,” she admitted. “Just as are many of the modern sorcerers that use these caves today, but because they are recluses not because they live alone or are holy men, but because they have, succeeded in detaching themselves from human concerns.”

“Why is that? Are sorcerers misanthropic?”

Nelida shook her head, brought her knees to her chest and wrapped her arms around her calves, I copied her posture. Immediately, I felt a warm buzzing sensation in my chest and abdomen, which heated me up in spite of the wind that blew around us.

“Sorcerers are not misanthropic,” she said with a glint. “We enjoy ourselves immensely in the company of others. Our teacher, the *nagual* Julian, often entertained his guests with elaborate tableaus and hilarious theatrical presentations. Yet in the midst of this revelry, he managed to remain detached from people. Sorcerers, even though they may appear to be ordinary men and women, are not like other people at all,”

“What makes them different?”

“Living on their place of power, learning from the earth, and *seeing* energy directly makes them regard everything as fluid and temporary. Through the *recapitulation*, a sorcerer breaks his ties with the world and with the self. As he strategically cuts himself off from extraneous disturbances, he simplifies his life and his desires. He seals himself off from human concerns, and very deliberately casts and secures a mysterious line.”

“Is it an energy line?” I asked.

“Yes, but not to the earth or to people. It is a line linking him directing to intent. When his change is complete, he can return to the world of people and yet remain apart from them. No matter where he is, alone or in the company of others, his only bond is to intent, and only the spirit can lay claim on him.”

I felt a sudden shiver at the finality and the loneliness such a bond entailed.

“Let’s build a fire,” Nelida suggested as if sensing my mood.

I helped her gather dry wood and arrange it in a pile. She asked me for some matches and struck one to a branch. The fire made a crackling sound that sent sparks flying upward. Soon a warm glow filled the clearing, I told her that don Juan had said that the ancient sorcerers knew how to foretell the future from the distribution of embers as the fire had burned out.

“The old sorcerers knew a great deal about a great many things,” Nelida said as she tossed another branch onto the flames. “They could examine the remains of the burnt branches and foretell the future.”

“How could anyone tell the future from bits of charred wood?” I wanted to know.

Nelida said that the sorcerers who knew the technique could not only predict events to come, but could examine the current state of affairs in order to avoid calamities or unwanted occurrences.

“A person with the facility, looks at the arrangement of the dying embers and branches, and the powers of fire and wood tell him what he wants to know.”

“Do you know how to do this?”

Nelida nodded. “It has to do with how the branches lie after the fire has gone out and the pattern the dying sparks make that gives the clue. For example, if the fire goes out suddenly and five branches remain glowing, then something sudden or on a grandiose scale will occur.”

“How do you know that?” I asked staring at the fire.

“Because all of the five directions are lit up at once,” she replied. “If, on the other hand, the fire burns down slowly, and there are many branches still left kindled, making a circular patter, then the turn of events will be gradual and for the better.”

Nelida added that the direction the charred branches are pointing is also an indication. A large branch pointing north, signifies great upheaval or activity; the east is the direction of dawn and wisdom, the south of warmth and nurturing, and the west of introspection and mystery.

“Now, if a branch is pointing straight up, or if a gust of wind suddenly blows the fire out, you’re in deep trouble.”

“Why is that?”

“*Intent* is indicating the direction of the zenith, and that always means giant movement.”

“I still don’t see what a fire has to do with events that affect human beings?”

“Our bodies, the elements, the energy of fire, the four compass points all merge into one,” Nelida explained. “That is how we can examine the arrangement of the charred wood and see how it relates to our lives.”

She said it was a mistake to regard ourselves as separate from the elements, for the same forces that move the fire, rule our energy bodies.

“The reason we think ourselves as separate from everything else,” Nelida explained, “is precisely because we are thinking. It is thought that separates us from the totality and makes us forget our common origin.”

She drew closer to the fire and told me to extend my hands near the flames.

“You can pull the energy of the fire into your body through your palms,” she suggested. “Allow the heat to merge with your body to warm you.”

I held out my palms, and felt the warmth of the fire flow into my hands, until I was so hot I began to perspire. I no longer needed my poncho and took it off.

“We are all made up of light,” Nelida continued. “Light activates our *energy body* and even though we have a human form, to a sorcerer who sees, we are essentially filaments of light.”

Nelida called our human side our ape’s heritage, adding that our animal heritage makes us act in an unruly fashion.

“We have another side that is totally hidden.”

“How do you know this other side exists if it’s completely hidden?” I wanted to know.

“Sorcerers *see* it, and we all know it is there,” she assured me. “But near as it is, for it is our

very selves, it always remains out of reach. As long as we cling to our ape form, we can never tap that other part, the part that sorcerers call the *energy body* or *double*."

I sighed and looked at the glowing embers.

"We all long for something just out of reach," Nelida said sensing my mood. "We see possibilities in our dreams; we wish to be more energetic, but we always try to find fulfillment in the things of the world. Hence, we are doomed to fail."

"Why is that?"

"Because the part that we are looking for to make us complete is not in the world," she said. "That part is the *energy body*. It belongs to the realm of pure energy. To tap it, we must turn our eyes elsewhere."

Nelida said that only the *recapitulation* enables us to see that the physical and intellectual holdings that we have so assiduously amassed are a mirage in front of the eyes. Yet we cling to them as if our very survival depended on it, even though it is only an illusory agreement based on our sharing of a common perceptual framework.

"Why is the *recapitulation* so important?" I asked.

"The *recapitulation* allows you to build an energy platform from which you can asses the concerns and experiences that you call your life. In other words, the *recapitulation* allows you the opportunity to come into contact with the other,"

"What is the other like?"

Nelida looked at me thought the glow of the dying embers.

"It is the light that moves us before it has been molded by interpretations. There is nothing worse than for our energy to be limited by the circumstances of our life. From infancy, we become shaped and contorted by labels, until we think our personal self is all there is, and we completely lose sight of our energy being or *double*."

"Can you give me a concrete example?" I asked stretching my legs that were beginning to cramp from sitting on hard granite.

"For example, take not having possessions," she said.

“Aren’t things important?” I asked. “You see so much poverty in the world. Who can blame people for wanting a better way of life?”

“Many of the sorcerers in our lineage experienced poverty, yet they themselves were not destitute.”

I argued that a child who knows only poverty has no defenses. It's entire world becomes meager and poor. Nelida nodded.

“Worse yet, her spirit becomes petty, greedy and twisted,” she said looking straight at me. “Material blight brought on by life’s circumstances is nothing compared to poorness of the spirit. Whereas the poor or hungry body can be healed with proper nourishment, there is no cure for a meager spirit. It has only misery and a lack of fulfillment awaiting it.”

I wanted to know if it was possible to avoid poorness of the spirit if one was born into a situation of material blight.

“If you have enough energy, you can’t be touched by anything,” Nelida assured me, “even if you are surrounded by poor and petty people.”

Nelida said that to a sorcerer who *sees*, all things are equal because they are energy. Therefore, a sorcerer living in a shack considers himself wealthy while an ordinary person living in the city may regard himself poor even though he has a house full of furniture and a closet full of clothes.

“Who do you think is poorer?” Nelida asked, “the sorcerer in the mountains or the person in the city?”

I told her that even though he has more, the person in the city was poorer, thinking that that was what she wanted to hear.

Nelida shook her head. “As long as a person has not detached his *energy body* from the idea of poverty or riches; as long as he has not recapitulated his life, he is poor of spirit,” she said.

Something she said about being detached from riches, called forth a childhood incident. Sometimes, for no apparent reason, my father would bring home a box of french pastries. My brothers and I would stand around the table and argue over who would get which piece, for there was only one per person, I wanted to eat all of them or at least more than one but I had

to wait until it was my turn to chose, for, invariably, age took precedent. I would be last and all the good creamy pastries had already been selected by my brothers, father and mother. I would be left with the fruit tart, or an egg custard when I would kill for the cream puff or chocolate eclair my brothers were eating.

“Why did you fret so?” Nelida asked when I told her the story. “Didn’t you know that pastries are all the same. It didn’t matter which one you picked or what was left in the box.”

I argued that they were not all the same at all. Some had chocolate icing, others had vanilla cream, and the napoleon that my father always chose, had a flaky crust, but Nelida insisted that I was being arbitrary in saying that one was intrinsically more desirable than the other.

“They are all made with flour, sugar, eggs and milk,” she said. “Only their appearance varies. Why wring your insides for a slight variation in outer appearance?”

I had never thought of it that way. Looked at from a detached perspective, they all had been pretty much the same. What made one or another better, was my brothers insisting that their pastry was better than mine. To covet one and turn my nose up on another was being arbitrary and petty.

“You should have let your brothers rave all they wanted, and still enjoy the one you had,” she said. “You could have practiced being indifferent to their mesmeric commands.”

“All I knew was I hated them for taking the best pieces,” I said, “but now I see that you are right; flour, milk and sugar are the same no matter what shape you put them in,”

“Only when a person has found that common ground in which all things are equal, is he truly free,” Nelida said. “For then he has liberated himself from the circumstances of life that place limits on his possibilities.”

Nelida stood up and walked to the edge of the clearing. She looked down at the bottom of the ravine. I had the sense that the stream was imprisoned by the massive canyon walls.

“Our *energy body* is like that stream,” she said pointing down. “The sides of the canyon are the circumstances of our lives that imprison us. Even when we look up, all we see are our prison walls. Our only hope for freedom is to flow steadily onward with an *unbending intent*.

“We have to have courage and optimism, especially when we begin *recapitulating* our lives,” Nelida continued. “We must know that the walls around us are illusory; they cannot mold us

forever; they cannot detain us on our journey. Like the stream, our energy must flow onward and not avoid any nook or cranny, but not linger either lest we never reach our final destination."

"What is that?" I asked.

"The sea," Nelida said. "The vast eternal sea."

Nelida left me alone on the hilltop to regroup my energy. She had said she was going to do some sorcery *not-doing*s in one of the nearby caves. I wanted desperately to go with her but she insisted I sit quietly and let the power of the place energize me. To while away the time, I gazed at a stagnant pool, left over from a recent rain. In it I could see reflected the nearby boulders and a scraggly toyan tree. For a while, I watched the rocks shimmering in the green-black liquid. A blade of sunlight piercing the branches made the water ripple. I gazed at the pool for a long time; the movement in it seemed to be mesmerizing me and bearing a silent message.

I looked up at the trees and rocks from where the sun was shining. They were the same trees and rocks I had seen reflected in the pool of water, and yet they were not. There was another world, and the reflections of things was it's entrance. What we call the real world was made up of substances, things like trees and rocks and water that we could name, yet they were as Illusory as the images in the pool of water.

I stood up and began to practice some sorcery passes, I made vertical figure eights in the air with my palm. I extended my arms and squeezed my shoulder blades to strengthen my cloak of confidence. I picked up the energy spark from the earth with my fingertips and brought them to my forehead. When I had finished moving, I began to search the underbrush for a plant Nelida had asked me to gather. When I had a bundle full I found Nelida sitting on a rock as if she had waiting for me to pass that way.

"Did you find the herb I asked you to look for?" she asked.

I told her I had some in my knapsack. It was extremely foul smelling and would no doubt stink up the bag for weeks to come.

"What are you going to do with the plants?" I asked.

"I'm going to make a paste to rub on the infected bites on your legs," She said. "An added advantage is that it will keep the body hair from growing back, so you wont have to shave your

legs."

I wonder how she knew I had scabs and cuts from continually shaving them with dull razor blades I was too lazy or cheap to replace.

As Nelida took the herbs, I told her about the realization I had had with the sun's reflections in the puddle of water. She shrugged, unimpressed.

"When the mind and body are at ease, a tiny crack is created and an insight can slip through," she said. "That's why I keep urging you to be silent and let the voice of the spirit tell you what's what. Otherwise you will never grasp anything."

She handed me a strip of dried meat, similar to the meat that don Juan had given me. I wondered if it came from the same batch of power meat. I ate with gusto. Walking had made me hungry. Nelida leaned back against a tree trunk and said she wanted to tell me more about the voice of *seeing* which was another way of talking about the voice of the *spirit*. She agreed that the insight I had had at the pool of water was a start but there was much more to it.

"What do you think causes someone lift her head and look at the sun?" Nelida asked gazing at me intently. "When all her life she only looked at her reflection in a stagnant pool of water? What makes a person suddenly turn in the direction of the other?"

I ventured a guess. "Perhaps, the person got bored looking at his own reflection," I said, using the masculine gender to counter her use of the feminine.

"But the person doesn't know that what she sees are only reflections?" Nelida argued. "She thinks that this is all there is to the world."

"Might he have turned his eyes by chance or by luck?" I asked.

"Could be," she agreed. "But there is yet another possibility."

She waited for me to make another suggestion.

"Maybe, the sun was so bright, it pulled the person's eyes toward it?" I offered.

Nelida nodded; her eyes began to sparkled. "You're right," she said. "The sun pulled her eyes with it's brilliance."

Nelida explained that the sun, in this case, was what sorcerers call *intent*. When one has polished one's link to *intent*, the power of *intent* is strong enough to pull one's eyes away from self reflection. Before this can occur, the body and mind must be purified through the *recapitulation* and the sorcery passes.

"By practicing the sorcery passes and by cleaning the lines of the past using the sweeping breath, by becoming one with your activities, whether it is studying, sewing, drawing, or anything else you might do, you transform yourself. Provided, of course, that you do these things with the sorcerers' purpose."

"What is the sorcerer's purpose?"

"To evolve," Nelida said. "To wake up *intent* so that one can see the world through lucid eyes. The eyes of the ordinary person are clouded with thoughts; his feelings are twisted with concerns. You must first clear a path to *intent*, before it can begin to pull you. Then you can gradually tap the *energy body*, and when it is as bright as the sun, you let go of the self and allow *intent* to move you."

"How does it move you?" I asked.

"With energy, my dear. With energy. Once you abandon the reasoning mind that makes everything factual, *intent* pulls you to the side of sheer energy."

Nelida said that it takes a great deal of *recapitulating* to let go of one's judgments, opinions, and our incessant need for control, but once one makes the crossing, it is as if one had always understood, only before, one hadn't the power to see that nothing ever existed in any other way.

"Concentrate on *intending* a bridge to the *energy body*," Nelida advised. "Do the sorcery passes, then use their energy and *intent* to cross over to the other side in full awareness. Only then can you escape the fate that awaits you as a human being."

"What fate awaits me?" I asked with a shiver. I feared that she had seen something in the charred embers of the fire and knew something I didn't.

"The fate of your parents, naturally."

I thought about my parents. My mother had died of cancer after a long bout of illness. My father died of cirrhosis of the liver alter months of excruciating pain. I froze at the thought of

what fate had in store for me, if I failed to make the crossing.

“Prolonged illness and death are all you have to look forward to,” Nelida said reading my thoughts. “And it doesn’t matter if one dies rich or poor, young or old, peacefully or slowly from some hideous disease. What matters is that people die unawares, consequently they all go to the same place.”

I asked Nelida if there was some sort of Hades where everyone who was not aware went when they died. Nelida laughed and said that unless we merge with our energy bodies, the hell is right here on this earth.

“But don’t you need a teacher to help you to change and get to your *energy body*?” I asked. “I know when I go back to Los Angeles, you won’t be there, and I’ll be at a loss as to what to do.”

“We don’t need teachers,” Nelida assured me. “Anyone can make the crossing. All we have to do is to let go of our holdings. Intend it; fulfill the sorcerers’ bidding, but who wants to recapitulate their lives and let go of herself?”

Nelida was talking about me again. I wanted to defend myself and argue that I had recapitulated my tail off, but I knew it would be pointless. There were enormous reservoirs left that I hadn’t even touched.

“There is really not much more to say on the subject,” Nelida said. “In fact, I am talking to you only to convince your reason that it's empty assertions and clinging will not lead to freedom. To hold onto the self is a waste of energy. You are better off using this energy to forge the *double* so that *intent* can, pull it to freedom.”

Nelida reiterated, that all one needs to do is to acquiesce and to abandon the willful need to control that characterizes our daily life.

“Whenever you practice the sorcery passes focus on the abdomen and let the energy flow unimpeded. Also never feel important or that you have accomplished something.”

“Why is that?” I asked.

“Only when one is *not-doing* and *not-being*, can *intent* take hold,” Nelida said.

“How can one do something and not do it at the same time? That has always been difficult for me to grasp.”

“You let go and allow the energy to act through you, regardless of what you do. Sink down and become quiet. Consider this as your new sorcery task: to become quiet and deep,”

Nelida took a thermos from a knapsack and poured a cup of water for me to drink. Deftly she screwed the top back and returned the thermos to her bag.

“Developing the *energy body* is another sorcery task that you must fulfill,” she said taking a sip of water. “Some people are more adept at this than others, but everyone begins at the same place; with a strong attachment to the self.”

“How does one break this attachment?”

“One simply decides one has had enough of indulging and pampering the child in us, and one starts to live a disciplined life. Everything we have shown you are means to make it easier for you to give up your obsessive self concern.”

I nodded. Something in me was agreeing with what Nelida was saying but some other part of me still didn’t want to let go of being in control. The thought that some outside force would rule me was antithetical to my idea of independence. I felt that unless I asserted myself, I would always be the last one to choose the pastry and would have to take what was left.

“Don’t be afraid to exert yourself. Freedom must be earned,” Nelida said. “Seize your quarter centimeter of chance and give it your best effort, but not to enhance your ego.”

Sensing my reluctance to change, Nelida continued. “A part of you wants to give up, while the other part clings. Consequently there is conflict, but once the decision is made, there is no more struggle, only purpose, delight and acquiescing.”

Nelida stood up, saying she wanted to practice some sorcery passes to help unify the body and mind and release the energy that was trapped in various body centers. She said that through our habit of holding everything in, energy stagnates. A sorcerer lets go of everything and does not carry anything inside him that would block the flow of energy.

“The first area that needs to be released is the sexual center,” Nelida said.

“Why, because it is the lowest?”

“No, because of the emphasis placed upon it by our puritanical culture,” she corrected me.

“This rigidity expresses itself in emotional needs for love and our excessive attention placed on courtship and mating. Courtship and mating are so dominant that they leaves no energy for anything else. Releasing and purifying the energy trapped in the sexual centers vitalizes the entire body including the centers located outside the luminous cocoon itself.”

When I asked her what she was talking about, she repeated that the sorcery passes increase one’s energy, or can be done as a means of invoking *intent*. They were doors to *not-being*, as well as a means of disrupting the habits the body has built up through a lifetime of doing.

“Sorcery passes wake up the *energy body*,” Nelida said. “They are designed to release trapped energy, but they must never be thought of as mere exercises, or even as martial arts, yoga or tai chi.”

“Why is that?”

“Their *intent* is different. It was set by sorcerers of ancient times.”

“Did they make them up?”

“No, they were not simply not made up. These passes come down in our linage through *dreaming* or from the spirit itself. When you have enough energy you too may be able to pull sorcery passes directly from the spirit. The voice of the *seeing* will tell you all you need to know about sorcery passes,”

Nelida clarified that whatever came to the sorcerers at any moment was designed for a given purpose.

“Sorcerers, especially *stalkers*, are extremely flexible. They follow the design of the spirit. All we do is empty ourselves and allow *intent* to move us. That is why no two sorcery passes are alike. And one never knows which pass one should do until the moment of doing it. This is the sense in which we practice them today. We do them to lead us to awareness and freedom. Used properly, their *intent* may help one escape in a flurry of light.”

Chapter 20: *Not-Being*

On the way back to don Juan’s house, we took a different trail. It was steep and rutted from the rain and flash floods had eroded the clay earth. After an hour of hiking, Nelida tapped my head

with a flick of her finger.

“You are talking to yourself again,” she said in a warning tone.

It was true. I was inwardly complaining to myself that my muscles ached and how I wished I had more physical prowess to keep up with someone twice my age. I laughed out of sheer nervousness.

“It’s not muscles you need for walking,” Nelida corrected me. “It’s internal strength. Walking with internal strength takes very little exertion. In fact, none at all.”

She stopped walking and ran her hand up my spine informing me that two currents flowed along both sides of the backbone.

“When I took you on this walk, it was to store your energy and balance your positive and negative forces, not to exhaust them,” she said. “These channels are interconnected with others, linking the internal organs with the muscles, tendons and skin

She explained that when sorcerers *see* the *energy body*, they *see* that it is made up of a subtle force that flows thorough bilateral and symmetrical channels, joining the front and back of the body to form a continuous circuit. To a *seer* it looks like a luminous egg or cocoon that surrounds the physical body. In between the shoulder blades, an arm’s length away is a point of intense luminosity which she called the place of awareness, or assemblage point.

She stressed that the energy passages have to be kept open in order for the subtle force to circulate freely. Whenever a person overexerts oneself physically, mentally, or emotionally, one creates a blockage, in which fibers of light become knotted. The energy is constricted in one area, thereby, producing an excess in another, like damning up a stream. This produces an energy imbalance causing illness in the body.

Nelida found a flat area and told me to clear it of rocks and debris.

“Lie down on your back and merge with the earth by tensing and relaxing all your muscles,” she said.

I did as she directed, spreading out my poncho as a blanket.

She asked me specifically to note the difference in feeling between tightening and relaxing various muscle groups.

“Tightening and relaxing involve two opposite energies,” she explained, as she placed my knapsack under my head for a pillow. “If a person is too relaxed or weak, he needs to tighten; if he is too tense or agitated, he needs to relax. When the forces of tension and relaxation are in balance, the person experiences health and well-being.”

Nelida elaborated saying that the body naturally regulates itself and finds it's optimal state of balance which is not only important for maintaining one’s health, but also for becoming aware of the universal forces that surround us.

When I again felt rested and my breathing was back to normal, she told me to sit up. Again she traced a line up my spine to the crown of the head, pausing to point out various centers with a soft pressure of her fingers.

“The first gate is at the tailbone; the second is between the kidneys; the third is higher, opposite the solar plexus; another is between the shoulder blades; another is at the nape of the neck, and there is the one here, at the top of the skull.”

She gently pressed the last place with her thumb placing her fingers like open fans on the back of the head.

“These areas are storage centers for energy,” she explained, lightly touching the six areas again so I could note them. “They also refine the energy as it flows up the back.”

As she pressed, I sensed a mild current or vibration. After a while, I felt my breath slow down and become even. My ribcage, that had been tight from walking, now expanded and contracted with ease, allowing me to intake more air. As she massaged my lower back near the kidneys, I experienced a sharp pain. She said that massaging the body releases excess energy that tends to accumulate in the muscles, especially around the joints. One way to massage was with the palms or the fingers, moving them along the pathways that encircled the body. Sorcerers could also point with the index finger to open up any energy blockage.

Nelida stressed that in the sorcerers’ world extreme behavior had to be avoided because if one went to far in one direction, one taxed the complementary forces that are needed to balance oneself. She added that a person should strive for ease and balance in order to achieve the optimal level of efficiency in any task.

“The center of life and wellbeing is in the *energy body*,” she said, again running a finger up my spine. “Between the two channels on either side of the backbone, is a third passageway.

When the point of awareness passes down the back and enters the womb, one becomes calm and centered. The *energy body* is so subtle that one hardly notices the assemblage point stirring. Yet when it moves away from it's moorings, the place behind the shoulder blades, it is as if we enter a different world. All human struggle seems insignificant."

For a while we sat in silence. Then she pointed to my boots and remarked that there is nothing worse than wearing shoes that don't fit well.

"Only when your energy and your activities are in perfect concordance, do you neither notice yourself nor what you do," she said.

I asked her to explained her statement.

"Because people want to be noticed," she began, "they continually call attention to themselves and to their acts. To concentrate on doing something while being indifferent to the outcome, means giving your full attention to the task. The most effective state, for a *stalker*," Nelida continued, "is to be completely absorbed in the moment, so one does not waste energy thinking about the past or future."

I asked her if it wasn't unreasonable to worry about whether or not one was overdoing anything. Nelida replied that one should never worry about anything, because to worry means that one is already imbalanced.

"Put another way," she offered, "if you are thinking while acting, it will be those thoughts, not the action, that will stay in your memory. On the other hand, if you are silent while acting, when you try to recall the actions, there will be little to remember. That is why sorcerers say that the self is an idea. When you understand this and stop your running internal monologue, another awareness will rise to the foreground."

As I thought on what Nelida had said, it seemed to coincide with what I had felt while performing the *recapitulation*. I had experienced a kind of withdrawal, a separation from myself and the world as I knew it. One part of me, which consisted of all that I recalled having experienced in the world, seemed to have become detached and was floating unencumbered. Behind this lay a substrata of awareness that was silent, vast and empty. It served as the background to support activities, but because all my attention had always been focused on my thinking self, that silent infrastructure had gone unnoticed. With the *recapitulation*, the distinction was clear; there existed a separation between myself as a conglomeration of ideas, feelings, activities, and this other indefinable, silent awareness.

“While *recapitulating*,” I told Nelida, “it seemed that awareness was no longer attached to my familiar self. It seemed to be hovering outside, observing the responses that I had habitually regarded as my familiar self. While the personal self is full of struggle, tension and stress from living; the other awareness is detached and indifferent, a dark silence, perfectly contained, without thought or desire.”

“What you are describing is the relationship between awareness of the personal self and awareness of the *energy body*,” Nelida clarified. “The *recapitulation* breath and the sorcery passes allowed you to activate the *energy body*. From that perspective you can see that the everyday self is only an appearance sustained by the power of speech and thought.”

Nelida patiently explained that after a person has swept his personal past clean with the breath, the self that is remembered, is no longer capable of affecting the present.

“Does a person still use the self to interact?” I asked.

“One does, but at the same time one knows better than to believe that what he sees is all there is to the world,” Nelida replied.

“I don’t understand,” I said. “Could you be more specific?”

“A person uses the self and the physical body in everyday situations, but he knows it is a facade, only for show,” Nelida explained. “Like a facade, it has an elaborate front, with nothing behind. One no longer believes the self is important or all there is to being. One sees everything as *controlled folly* floating in a sea of mystery.”

Nelida stressed that detachment happens naturally once awareness is no longer identified with the personal self.

“When the thinking self remains at the service of pure awareness, one becomes increasingly quiet. Yet one’s actions are easy and efficient. This is because the energy that was once reserved for enhancing the personal self, is directly employed for creativity, health and well-being.”

Nelida reiterated that to confuse pure awareness of the *energy body* with the personal, thinking self, is deadly.

“Not only does it force the *energy body* to follow the actions of an undisciplined master, or an unruly child, but it also tricks the person into believing that what one sees is all there is to

existence. The personal self is linked to the senses and seeks immediate gratification in things that are finite. The *energy body* must never be linked to the senses or be confused with anything. Only then can it retain it's rightful place as conduit of the life force."

"Why is that?"

"Because when awareness becomes identified with the things it is aware of, including the self or the mind, it becomes clouded by the interpretations of daily life. You must allow the *seer* in you to guide you," she stressed, "and not let the personal self pull awareness up and down like a yo-yo in an attempt to satisfy it's every whim."

I had to agree that it is hellish to be constantly at the mercy of one's feelings and those of others, but I knew that when it came to actual practice, it was a different matter.

"What is involved is a turning of the tables," Nelida continued, "and that can only be done by returning one's attention to the silence that is beyond speech and thought."

"What exactly is pure awareness?" I asked.

"The awareness of *not-being*," she said. "It is a direct link to a force sorcerers call *intent*: a force that is not the self, yet one that gives rise to all things, including the self. When you understand this contradiction, you will see that there is nothing to defend and nothing to reflect upon, not even the self."

After a long silence Nelida went on to say that the mind experiences perfect harmony when the right and left channels in the body merge and one's awareness crosses over to the *energy body*. This state is reflected by a specific movement in the assemblage point.

"When one is centered, it's easy to see *energy* directly," Nelida explained, "because the physical body no longer makes itself felt. If you try to remember how your body feels when it is in a state of heightened awareness, or when you experience the lines of the universe, I guarantee you will have difficulty recalling these sensations."

I had to agree. Whatever feelings I experienced during the *recapitulation* in the cave or in the trees were so different from the feelings I was accustomed to having, that later I could not recall them.

"That's because in the trees, you were operating directly from your *energy body*, just as you are doing now while you are with me. In the trees your *energy body* woke up. To suspend

someone from the trees, is a sorcery maneuver to break the pull gravity has on the physical body and consolidate the *energy body*."

Nelida explained that all experiences leave a trace in the body. To stand erect, for example, involves a certain distribution of pressure and weight on the legs and also a tensing and relaxing of certain muscles groups. Sitting involves a different pattern of bodily awareness, depending on how gravity exerts it's pull on the physical body.

"Being suspended from the trees or climbing them, breaks the pull of gravity and allows the *energy body* to take over," she said. "In addition, the fact that there were no far off horizons allowed you to concentrate on the immediacy of the moment, and since you have no history of feelings for acting in the moment without reflection, you became silent for you had no words to describe what you were doing. That's why it is so difficult for you to remember what happened after you woke up in the trees."

"What exactly did happen?"

"You were training your *energy body* to *stalk*," Nelida said. "The novel sensations and responses not formerly encountered in your storehouse of experience, allowed you to forge your *energy body*. You have already experience casting your luminous net and entering the black cavern above you head. These, too, are instances of *stalking* with your *energy body*."

Nelida leaned back against a rock, stretched her legs and told me to sit silently while she refreshed my memory about *not-doing*.

"*Not-doing* is to act without acting; it is to have no words or labels to describe your actions."

"How can one act without knowing what one is doing?" I asked.

"By acting from deep silence, without becoming involved with your actions," she replied. "For when you are not tied to expectations or to the outcome of your actions, you will not notice your actions. Like shoes that fit just right."

Nelida added that when one is empty and silent inside, yet full of vigor and activity, one is acting without acting. On the other hand, if we are filled with concern and worry and expectations, and have little energy directed toward our task, we are acting and in a very inefficient manner. We must dissolve the person in us, so that we can be free from being and doing. When one has no desires or ambitions, yet one is vitally engaged in the action at hand, one knows unerringly when to continue and when to stop.

“There is a door to *not-being*,” Nelida said. “It opens so one can slip inside. Once inside, power renews and revitalizes the *energy body*, or it can destroy us. It is that indifferent, but to find the opening one has to be selfless, and to go through it with awareness, one has to rid oneself of attachments to our familiar world.”

“What does one do inside the door?”

“You allow the fire from within to dissolve you and you experience *not-being*.”

“Is that what happens when people die?”

For a moment she was silent. “Everything originates from there and returns to it,” Nelida said. “Some call it the womb or creator of the universe. Others call it the destroyer of the universe. For that is what happens. The world as we know it comes to an end.”

Nelida explained that in order to prolong one's life for more than the usual span of sixty or seventy years, one has to dissolve one’s physical body again and again without losing one’s awareness. A person can let go little by little through the *recapitulation*, or at death a person is forced to relinquish everything all at once. I was curious to know more about the mysterious crack she was alluding to.

“For sorcerers it is the realm beyond death,” Nelida said. “It is familiar to us and to you because, although you are not consciously aware of it, you have been there many times before.”

I nervously played with my Kleenex, only to realize I had shredded it to bits. I put the pieces in my pocket not to leave traces of litter on the ground.

“You can look at it this way,” Nelida continued. “The body you have now is asleep. It hasn’t yet learned the intricacies of *stalking* with the *double* and of *not-doing* and *not-being*, but your awareness is old and we have taken you beyond the barrier of the self many times. That is why sensations there are not unknown to you.”

I asked her why she said that my awareness is old. She explained that some people have an awareness that extends back into the realm of *not-being*.

“How far back?” I wanted to know.

“Only you can answer that question,” Nelida replied. “Or rather, only your awareness that is

old can say how far into *not-being* it has journeyed."

"Is it like reincarnation?" I asked.

"There is no reincarnation," she replied. "There is no past or future either. Awareness is just awareness. There are infinite lines criss-crossing the universe. Bach one of them is a conglomeration of awareness. All I am saying is that your awareness has traveled on other lines, besides the one that amalgamates this world."

Suddenly, I felt apprehensive. I experienced a moment of confusion, in which part of me knew something, yet couldn't say what it was.

"Practice dissolving your physical body," Nelida recommended. "Only then will you be able to answer your questions. Going beyond your individual self, puts you directly in touch with the ancient awareness. You already know from your *recapitulation* that the self is only a cover; a shield that we use in the world. To *stalk* with the *energy body*, you have to experience *not-being* many times and accumulate awareness in order to make it recognizable."

"How can I *stalk* with the *energy body* without the *nagual* or you or Emilito to guide me?"

"I already told you that the best way to *not-be*, is to stop talking to yourself. That you can do all by yourself. I also told you that we make the world with our words and thoughts, which together with actions and feelings constitutes our being. *Not-being* is not to have thoughts, either about ourselves or about the world."

"How can one not have thoughts?"

"Not to think is not the same as being imbecilic," Nelidia said. "Rather, it leads one to pure awareness and to silence which are the prerequisites of *not-being*.

"To be inwardly silent," Nelida continued, "is to make no judgments or distinctions between good and evil, myself and others, then and now, and more importantly, it means not having concepts of any kind. Try feeling and acting with your *energy body*, then you can avoid the pitfalls of always thinking about things,"

"Is it wrong to think about things?"

"No, it's not wrong, but it's distracting to always talk to yourself. Doing this and that will never lead you to the *energy body*. Reasoning only produces limited knowledge and shoddy

awareness. There is a much more inclusive way to understand, and that is to intuit directly without the intervention of thought."

I felt forlorn, dejected. I knew when I returned to Los Angeles and to the University, thinking and reasoning would be all that awaited me.

"We have talked of this before," Nelida reminded me. "It comes down to this, regard the self as unimportant; so unimportant, in fact, that you forget about it altogether. Then, *per force*, you will begin to forge your *energy body*."

"What about when I am in school and have to study for an examination. How can I use my *energy body*, then? And what about when I am talking to professors and fellow students?"

She tapped the top of my head and said that if one is selfless, gradually, the boundaries between the perceiver and the object that is being perceived disappear. She described selflessness not as a moral condition, but as an impersonal state in which one no longer regards the self as a separate entity; a state in which there is no concept of the perceiving self, nor of the thing perceived.

"What does this state feel like to the person?"

Nelida thought for a moment then replied. "It is as if one has misplaced something, or has lost sight of it and can't remember what it is, but because it is not important, one is no longer interested in finding it."

Nelida made clear that the reason the self is usually regarded so highly is because we use it as our single and constant reference point with respect to the world. It is the center from which we think, feel, and shape our existence, and we have been forging it since we were infants.

"Abandon the self, and you do away with the fluctuations of thought," she continued. "By the same token, still your thoughts, and the self is erased. Then you can *stalk* with the *double*, then you see your professors and your fellow students as *controlled folly*. Then everything is equal and you can grasp any concept directly with your *energy body*. Then you are truly capable of having a romance with knowledge. Without the intervention of thought and the self, you will be operating from the point of *not-being* where the personal self is no longer your primary point of view. Then the *seer* in you will tell you what is what."

"Why is *not-being* so important?"

“Thinking makes you ask stupid questions,” she said. “Marvels issue forth from the realms of *not-being*; health, clear vision, direct understanding, mysterious powers, but a person needs total concentration and a willingness to abandon the personal self in order to open the door and slip through in full awareness.”

Nelida scrutinized me in the amber light.

“Are you willing to let go of your wonderful self?” she asked point blank.

For a moment I hesitated, thinking she meant that I was really wonderful. Then I nodded even though I knew she meant the opposite.

“I certainly hope so,” she said. “For your resolve will be tested sooner than you think.”

Chapter 21: Stalking With The Double

Emilito took me to the most beautiful Spanish colonial house I had ever seen other than Clara’s. Outside, it had a plain facade with bars on the windows and several second story balconies overlooking the streets below. The balcony I had admired from the plaza was laden with potted geraniums and thick green ferns. Whoever lives here loves plants, was the feeling that came to me as we entered through the massive twelve-paneled door.

Inside, the courtyard was cool and dark. It reminded me of a cloister from another era. Columns and arches lined stone walkaways. Raised beds framed a small orchard with fruit trees. Portions of the high walls were covered with honeysuckle and hanging wisteria growing up trellises. Cool stone benches were flanked with flowers growing in ceramic pots with a marbleized bluish-green glaze, and out of a stone planter grew a huge agave cactus.

To one side was a dark hallway which lead to a small garden patio. A high-backed carved wooden bench was set against the wall, and a beautiful jacaranda tree shaded the rectangular enclosure. To the side was a stone grotto, with a slender waterfall flowing into a tiny pool. The house and grounds seemed to me the most peaceful place on the earth. From time to time I could hear the flurry of birds, but even they were hushed and subdued as if out of respect for the sanctity of the house. To think that this oasis of tranquility existed in the heart of a busy cosmopolitan city seemed in itself an act of power.

“Sit on this bench and wait for the lady of the house to show herself,” Emilito suggested. “Now

that I've delivered you, I'll be on my way."

"Wait, wait, Emilito. I don't know the lady of the house. Won't you stay and introduce me to her?"

"Of course you know her," Emilito said, surprised. "You met her in Sonora. Her name is Zuleica."

At the mention of her name, I remembered the lady at the fiesta who had given me the cocoa to drink for the flea bites. She had wanted me to stay with her but I had declined. I had no idea she lived in such beautiful surroundings.

"But what should I do when I meet her?" I asked.

Emilito gave me a stern look. "When you meet her, be impeccable," he advised. "That's all anyone can do."

Before I could ask him what would impeccability mean in this situation, he left through a side door leading off the corridor. I sat on the bench, feeling forlorn, watching the fish playing in the pond. The harmony of that house and the ripples in the water soon made me feel drowsy, but in a pleasant way. I exhaled a few times, and with my breath all my concerns seemed to flow out until there was nothing left but a profound sense of wellbeing. I closed my eyes and listened to the water running over the small rocks, and imagined seeing the tiny goldfish that by now had hid under some water plants.

"If only this waiting dream would last forever," I heard a woman's voice say.

I turned and looked into the dark corridor but saw no one. but those words summed up in me the moment, for that is exactly how I felt.

"That's right, dear, rest, and let the sound of the water take you where it will."

The voice came from my left, very near. Startled, I opened my eyes to see a tall lady wearing a black flowing caftan with an Indian motif around a stand up collar. Her auburn hair was piled high in a pleasing although somewhat old-fashioned hair do. The skin of her face was taut and her eyebrows arched expressively with the aid of eyebrow pencil. Her mouth was thin and delicate and her eyes were fixed on me in such a piercing manner that I knew it was Zuleica.

She could hypnotize me with her gaze if she wanted too, I thought, but somehow I didn't mind.

I trusted her; for at a deep level we were alike. Then the realization surfaced as to how we were alike and that made me uneasy. We were both quite a bit crazy and had to use all our energy to make a coherent presentation of ourselves in the face of utter chaos.

“You’re not afraid of me are you?” Zuleica asked solicitously. “Because I assure you, I’m here to help you.”

“I’m not afraid,” I said and meant it. Zuleica was so far beyond the pettiness of the world that she exuded strength and vitality in her voice and movements. Except for her burning eyes, she was the picture of calmness and serenity.

“You’re going to stay with me for a while, and I’m going to teach you how to *stalk*, with your *dream body*,” she said.

“But I still haven’t finished *recapitulating*,” I said. “Shouldn’t I continue with that?”“*Recapitulating* is important, but so is *dreaming*. I have to set you up in the proper manner now because there is so little time. Then you can practice on your own. While you are here, however, you have to follow my instructions. Agreed?”

I had no choice but to nod my head in agreement for she was nodding hers.

“*Dreaming* and *gazing* go hand in hand,” Zuleica began. “You already caught on to that when you *gazed* at the ripples in the pond. Now let the sound of the water take you. That’s how you start. You find something in the world that shimmers or has a glow to it and you *gaze* at it. Then you find a sound, like rain, water from a stream, even the noise of the city will do, and you follow the sounds. Then you transfer it into your dreams by *gazing* in your dreams or hearing that sound in your sleep.”

I knew what she meant, for once I had a rock tumbler that made a terrible rattling noise. Since I had to keep it on 24 hours a day for the stones to be polished as they collided against each other in the tumbler, I could hear that noise in my sleep. I remember that noise would take me places I didn’t want to go. So I finally had to turn off the machine at night.

“There are exercises you can do you to move your awareness to the other side,” Zuleica said.

“The other side?”

“To your *dreaming body*.”

She spoke in such a soft melodic voice that it calmed me just to listen to her.

“When you sleep, you must allow your *dream body* to become aware, conscious oi itself. You do this first by looking at your hands, and then by getting up out of your bed to move around. Or you can find anything else you wish, such as the item you gaze at during the day. Or something in particular you wish to find. In other words, your *dream body* must respond to your commands. To *stalk* with the *double* is to control your movements in a specific endeavor and not expend all your energy in one crazy outburst.”

“How does one expend one’s energy?” I asked.

“Gradually, harmoniously. Try to prolong your *dreaming* endeavor as long as possible but always reserve energy so you can wake up and you don’t get lost in places you won’t be able to come back from.

“Now, I will show you a few specific exercises you can practice.”

She placed a cushion on the floor in front of a low. wrought iron table and told me to sit comfortably, crossing my legs if I wished. In the center of the table she placed a short blue candle and lit it. After flickering for a while, the yellow flame formed a perfect unwavering oval. Zuleica gently blew on the flame causing it to leap sideways for an instant. When the current of air had passed, the flame straightened out and became calm again. I watched Zuleica intently for I knew there was a lesson in what she was doing.

“There are two sides to everything,” she said sitting down in a high-backed cane chair, “and that includes the mind. On the one hand, it can think, reason, and reflect upon itself in order to create and draw conclusions. The other quality of the mind is to be silent, inactive and without thought. We all know how to reason and reflect upon ourselves, but to achieve silence is more difficult.”

Without getting up, she blew on the flame again. I was surprised to see that the flame leaped as it had done before.

“The mind is like this flame. It flares up at the slightest disturbance and flutters the moment a breeze touches it,” she said. “Thoughts and desires are like gusts of air; they activate the mind and make it flutter.”

In a clear tone she explained that there are two approaches to achieving mental rest. She stood and placed her hand around the flame to form a partial shield, then blew at it again. This time,

the flame, being protected by her hand, did not flicker.

“One approach to silence and rest is to shield the mind from outside disturbances that can unsettle it. You do this by removing yourself from the disruptive or injurious forces that threaten your wellbeing. In other words, you withdraw and hide yourself in your depths.”

The second method, Zuleica said was more difficult to accomplish for it involved a delicate maneuver of shielding the mind, not from outside influences, but from it's own influence. In this case, since the disturbing stimuli come from within, there is no way to run or retreat into the self, for the mind itself is agitated and running. Therefore, one has to stop one’s agitation by fixing the mind to some point such as an image, idea, or sound, and in this way render it immobile.

“Quietude is the product of discipline and training,” Zuleica said. “It involves stopping the internal dialogue by focusing on a single point, or by expanding awareness to merge with the great silence that exists beyond the limits of thought.”

As I listened to her talk, I felt a quietness settle about me as if it came not from her words but from her very being.

“To be unperturbed means that nothing can pull your attention away from it's center,” she said sensing my mood. “One of the best methods to achieve this is by gazing at a light or luminous object.”

She asked me if I had understood the two approaches for resting the mind, which she said were really methods of *gazing*. When I hesitated, she repeated them. In the first instance, the body and mind are removed from the disturbing stimuli, by retreating or moving away from it. This can be accomplished because the disruptive forces come from the outside. In the second instance, the body and mind are set firm, because the disturbances arise from within one’s own being.

“It’s best to use a combination of both methods; retreat and fixation,” she said, “That is why you are here in this quiet house where no one bothers you. While you are learning these *gazing* techniques you must retreat from the outside world, but you must also retreat from the world you carry inside you by fixing your mind though *gazing* practices.”

“What does fixing the mind actually do?” I asked.

“Only a fixed or centered mind allows you the freedom to come and go as you please.”

I told her I didn't understand how a fixed mind could allow one to move about. It seemed to be a contradiction. Zuleica carefully picked up the candle and slowly moved it from side to side so that the flame did not waver but different areas of the table were illuminated.

"Notice that the flame does not flicker and yet it moves about. A fixed and steady awareness allows you to see into anything, to move in any direction without becoming agitated by what you see or do. Therefore, you are able to come and go anywhere and still be in control."

Zuleica set the candle on the table so that the flame was just at the level of my eyes.

"If you're mind is not fixed, and your thoughts jump around, whatever you see will pull you and affect your awareness. Then you will have to struggle to extricate yourself before you are free to move on to something else, and in no time at all you will have so many ties that you won't be able to move at all."

"What will happen then?"

"You will have to *recapitulate* your acts to free your energy," she said. "That's why we recommend that one always *recapitulates* the events of the day so that one is freed of their influence, and one does not build up energetic bonds."

Zuleica stressed that recalling the events of my life combined with the sweeping breath I had learned, could clean not only past ties, but also maintain awareness in a fluid condition every moment of the day. Once freed, the awareness can be focused and used at the service of *intent*, or the spirit that rules us and gives us life.

"We must use our awareness to liberate awareness," she said. "Just as we use a needle to take out a splinter in a finger. Now, enough explanation. Let's get down to practice."

Zuleica instructed me to *gaze* at the candle for a moment then to place the palms of my hands over my eyes, and visualize the flame. For a while I looked at the flame then closed my eyes and covered them with my palms. I could see a chartreuse circle, then a golden flame appeared which turned into a bright red-orange glow. Soon the flame was replaced by a small black opening that formed in front of my eyes.

Zuleica told me to repeat the exercise of *gazing* at the flame, then covering my eyes with my palms. This time, the reddish light seemed to be moving to my right, and it was difficult to keep it centered in my inner field of vision. She said I should try to move the image of the

flame closer and further away from me, while keeping my eyes covered with my palms. After a while I was able to hold the image of the flame and move it further away or bring it closer to me using the force of my mind.

"This *gazing* practice will help you to develop your focusing ability," Zuleica said when I opened my eyes again. "Just as the *sorcery passes* strengthen your *energetic body*, your mental control can be sharpened through *gazing* techniques."

She added that visualizing a light, not only quiets the thoughts, but it also activates a fundamental *energy center* in the back of the head, invigorating the entire body. She remarked that with continued practice, I would no longer need to *gaze* at a candle, but would be able to see the flame simply by closing my eyes. The light, once fixed, would help me to concentrate on a single point, to the exclusion of all other influences.

"This is one way of resting the mind," Zuleica said. "Even though you are actively concentrating, your mind is at rest because it is not dispersed in a thousand directions."

The most invigorating form of rest, she explained, is not passive sleep in which a person is at the mercy of disturbing dreams, but a controlled, active concentration, in which one is attending only the invigorating light in front of the eyes.

She recommended that I stand up and walk around for a while to loosen my limbs before going on to the second *gazing* exercise. When I had again sat down on the cushion, I saw that Zuleica had placed a large black crow's feather on top of the table.

"Now, I'll show you another way of resting the mind," she said. "Sit quietly, breathe naturally and without any thoughts, *gaze* at the feather."

She said that I was to focus my attention on the feather until it and I merged. She said it was possible to merge with any object one was *gazing* at so that it was no longer a separate entity, but something alive and a part of one's own *energetic being*.

"How is that possible?" I asked. "Everyone knows the world is made up of separate objects."

Zuleica arched an eyebrow. "Is it really?" she asked. "Objects are only separate when we think about them. When we *gaze* at them, they merge in a single field of energy which also includes our *energetic bodies*."

She looked at me to see if I comprehended what she said. I must have given her a dumb look

for she added, “I have just revealed a sorcery secret and you insist on taking it as an ordinary statement. Think about it what I said.”

I was silent for a moment. “It still looks like an ordinary leather to me,” I said stubbornly.

Zuleica shook her head, “The here and there are one. The there and here are one. Nothing is separate from anything.”

As I *gazed* at the feather, I noticed that my breathing became slower, more rhythmical. It had lowered down into my abdomen. My thoughts faded and I was immersed in a profound silence. It seemed that Zuleica was right. At one point the feather was aware and observing me; it radiated energy at me as if it were conscious of my watching it. I had the distinct certainty that if intended it I could make the feather lift off the table and float in the air, for we were energetically linked.

After a while, Zuleica told me to move my head in small circles to rest my eyes; they had begun to tear from the strain of staring at the feather. She explained that the point of the *gazing* was not to stare fixedly at an object, but to let the eyes gently caress the object, so that, responding to one’s feeling, it opens up and emanates it's own feeling and knowledge.

“It is a merging of both feelings, from the *gazer* and the object, that results in a common blending of awareness and a sense of mutual trust and affection,” Zuleica said.

She further elaborated that this feeling of openness and empathy is the result of stopping one’s internal dialogue and of allow one’s inner sensibility to spill forth and merge with whatever one is *gazing* at.

“Pick any object that is pleasing to you,” Zuleica said. “Never *gaze* at anything that is unpleasant or frightening.”

“Why is that?”

“Because through steadfast *gazing* you open centers in your *energetic body* and the energy of the object will enter inside you. By the same token, if you are not in an agreeable mood, you should not inflict your negative feelings on the objects around you by concentrating on them, regardless of whether they are rocks, feathers or people.”

I rested my eyes by making circles with my nose, first in a clockwise, then in a counterclockwise direction. When I was relaxed again, Zuleica gave me a third exercise for

fixing the mind, one which involved visualizing a shape or form.

“What kind of a form should I visualize?” I asked.

“Any pleasing shape will do,” she replied. She picked up my drawing pad and inscribed a circle. In it's center, she drew a smaller circle and shaded it black. She said that a circle was always pleasing to visualize because it represented the completeness of the universe from which nothing could be added or taken away. To visualize a circle, she said filled one with a sense of fullness and wellbeing that was needed for a joyous journey.

Zuleica told me to close my eyes, and moving in a clockwise direction, slowly and smoothly draw a circle with my mind. Then my inner feeling was to leap into the center of the circle and momentarily rest there. Then I was to fix my attention at the top and begin inscribing the circle again and repeat the procedure of pushing through the center of it. Zuleica explained that the circular motion of the eyes as well as mentally leaping into the circle’s center, should be repeated until I could do it with great concentration.

I found this exercise more difficult to do than the last one. It made me drowsy. I began to yawn and fidget.

“When gazing at an inner or outer shape, one must not become agitated or let one’s thoughts roam,” Zuleica warned. “If they do, immediately bring your attention back to your task.”

She explained that leaping into the circle’s center had a very powerful effect on the energy points located behind the eyes. Pushing into the center of the circle, helped to open the passageway or door to the other world.

“What’s on the other side?” I wanted to know.

Zuleica hesitated. “Perhaps everything, perhaps nothing. Soon you will see for yourself.”

She suggested I continued inscribing circles in order to still and strengthen the mind. She assured me that by gently yet firmly pushing to the center, I would develop a steadfastness and imperturbability that were indispensable for journeying with the *energy body*.

After I practiced the technique several more times, Zuleica stood up and told me to select one of the three techniques she had shown me, and practice it while she attended to some affairs. I decided to gaze at the lighted candle; somehow I found the smooth yellow flame appealing. When I closed my eyes, I could still see the flame and practiced moving it back and forth and

to the side. It seemed that only moments had passed, when Zuleica returned and told me to blow out the candle.

"'Whenever the mind is agitated or unsettled, be sure to do one of these exercises," she advised, "The golden flame, once fixed in your mind will shine through the fog like a beacon from the other side. Once fixed, even if your eyes are closed, it will be there in front of you to calm your heart."

We sat in almost total darkness for the sun had already set, and she had not yet lit the outdoor lanterns.

"Why is it important to quiet the mind?" I asked.

"If you link your actions to the level of profound silence," Zuleica said, "you will have accomplished a delicate feat; that of action thorough inaction or *not-doing*. Once one learns to harness the energy of *not-doing*, one can become truly powerful."

She further explained that in order to accomplish anything, we needed an *unbending intent* that gives one's acts direction and purpose, as well as a refined and subtle awareness that give one's acts power. She stressed that only a refined and subtle awareness will allow us to reach beyond the world of form and enter the energy layers of the other realms.

She leaned closer on her chair and said in a low tone, "now I will reveal the second of the sorcerer's secrets. When you practice *gazing* you are really practicing *dreaming* while you are awake,"

Again she looked at me to see if I understood her meaning.

"You are focusing the energy of *intent*, which is abstraction itself, and are moving away from the physical level into the realm of pure energy.

She explained that *intent* is the force that holds things together, gives them order and power. *Gazing* awakens the underlying awareness sorcerers call *intent*, that force that enables us to perceive, and links our body directly to it. It is also this firm and unbending force called *intent*, that distinguishes acts of power from the shallow, arbitrary acts of everyday life.

"Through *gazing*, your physical body is gradually transformed so that it matches your mental vitality. Finally, the body becomes so light that it's is rendered into sheer energy. When this happens, one is *dreaming* with the totality of oneself. All one has to do is to *intend* something

and the body will perceive it. This happens because one has linked oneself to *intent* and is *dreaming* oneself using the power of creation itself. *Gazing* techniques were designed by sorcerers of antiquity to arrive at this subtle manipulation of perception."

Zuleica picked up the feather and let it fall gently onto the table.

"Practice *gazing* and you will eventually purify your body so that it will become as light as this feather," she said. "When your body becomes transformed into pure energy like your mind, there will be no difference between what you think and what you are. The here and there of space and time will merge into a single awareness of now, and your mind and body will no longer be separate, but a single energetic unit of being here.

As she talked, I sensed someone else watching us from the darkness of the corridor. At first I only caught a glimpse of a shape; then I saw him standing there, as if eavesdropping on our conversation or observing my practice. I had noticed him earlier and had kept turning my head to see if the man was still there. I assumed it was someone living in that house, for the house was large with many rooms.

Zuleica smiled, "It's not time to meet him yet, but you will soon when you are more invisible. For now, concentrate on your practices."

"Who is that man?" I asked alarmed.

"The one who makes the darkness respond," she said.

"Respond to what?"

"To his bidding, to his *intent*. He is the Master of Intent. When you learn to *stalk* with the *double*, he will come and show you his art."

"Can't I meet him now?" I asked.

She laughed and said I was in no condition to meet anyone in my present energetic state, and it would take a great deal of energy to interact with the Master of Intent.

"In the darkness you sense him. He will speak to your *double* directly. When you reach the point of *silent knowledge*, he will guide you, and you will know."

"What will I know?"

“I can’t tell you that. You will simply know directly, and if anyone asks you, you yourself will not be able to say what it is that you know. It will be too deep, too vast for words. You will try to remember, but you won’t be able to think of it, because what you know is so far removed from thought that words will fail you.”

“Then what good is it?” I asked, “if I won’t remember what he teaches me, or if I won’t be able to say what it is, what’s the point of knowing anything?”

“You will make things happen,” she said. “You will cause the darkness to move and manifest itself in light.”

For a while, I tried to figure out what she meant, and then suddenly I knew. For as Emilito had warned me, someone had already been showing me how to *stalk* with the *double*. I didn’t know what Zuleica meant, but I knew that I already knew. The certainty came to me that the Master of Intent had been teaching me all along. The closest way I could explain it was that he had been setting up something in an area that was beyond my waking attention, beyond even my dreams. It was a place where no dreams existed and yet energy flowed unimpeded by thoughts or wishes or even images arising in sleep.

With that realization, the man stepped out of the shadows. I was not surprised to see that it was the same man I had encountered at the border crossing in Nogales; the one who had made me faint by pushing my upper back, and the one I had seen again in Catalina’s house, when she had pointed out the window to her protector.

He seemed to know me also, and yet I had laid eyes on him only twice as far as I could recollect. He nodded perfunctorily from a distance. I avoided his gaze for I remembered what happened the last time I looked into his eyes. He said nothing, and I knew there was nothing to be said, but the pressure of his presence made my thoughts stop and the muscles of my arms and legs swell as a current of energy passed through me. I could hear the air around me buzzing; I breathed heavily, taking in gobs of air though my mouth. Then I felt the back of my neck pop as he came, or rather, drifted closer.

I saw his mouth move; he was saying something, but I couldn’t hear him. It was a silent sound and I was being pushed away by that voiceless whisper. I fell backwards onto the bench, and had to hold on tor dear life so I wouldn’t pass out. Then I felt the top of my head open and something shoot out so violently that I ended up in San Francisco.

I knew it was San Francisco because I could see the Golden Gate bridge. I was soaring over the

choppy gray waters and could see where the rust colored paint was peeling off the massive iron girdles held up by cables. Then I was flying around skyscrapers, large office buildings with dark glass windows. I flew very hard so I wouldn't get trapped between the buildings, which had strong air currents circling around them. I could hear the deafening roar the air conditioning units on the top of the buildings. I did not like that area one bit. It was so menacing that I became frightened. The shadows of the tall building on the streets below made the scene dark and ominous.

I could hear a horrible sound, I looked and knew it was a helicopter, and I was being sucked into the propeller blade, for the wind was horrendously strong and I could not fight against it. I made a supreme effort to pull away using every bit of my energy in my womb. Then I felt myself sucked into a long tunnel by a cord that was attached to my body somewhere at the other end. I was pulled south, through different terrain zooming below me at a fantastic speed. I saw or rather sensed the scenery changing from cities, to desert, to cities and lakes as I covered thousands of geographical miles in mere seconds. When the rushing stopped, I found myself back in Guadalajara, in the patio, slumped on the bench of Zuleica's house.

I opened my eyes and found Zuleica staring at me. I told her where I had been. She was not pleased to hear of my travels.

"You expend all you energy in one uncontrolled outburst. You traveled a great distance for nothing, and to what avail?"

"I don't know what happened," I said.

"The master of darkness loaned you some of his energy and you wasted it in a cross-country joy ride, that's what happened. I hope you at least enjoyed the sights."

I shook my head. "It all zoomed by too fast, like a movie played at an ultra fast speed, I just got glimpses of water and desert and buildings, and many cities below."

"Glimpses. Glimpses. What good are glimpses?" Zuleica said. "We are after control. You have a great deal of work ahead of you before you can use your *stalking* techniques to control your flying or whatever you chose to do with your *dreaming* energy. So practice, practice."

She left me alone in the darkness so I could continue practicing the *gazing* exercises.

Chapter 22: The Other Side

After several weeks of practicing the *gazing* and *dreaming* techniques Zuleica had taught me, I felt a strange silence settle over me. I was no longer in a hurry; I had no appointments to keep; nowhere to go and no one to talk to. I seldom saw Carlos or don Juan, and when our paths did cross, they usually avoided me. I could move freely on the ground floor of Zuleica's house and in the patios and garden, but I was not allowed upstairs or outside the compound. My food was brought to me by a servant, and I slept in a high platform for which I needed a stepladder to climb into.

During the day, I worked on some sketches. Drawing, I realized, was really another form of *gazing*; it allowed me to spend hours in total silence without getting bored. At night, I practiced finding my hands in my dreams; moving about without shifting the scene; locating certain object Zuleica had specified beforehand, and giving myself commands in my dreams, that I would carry out with as much detail as possible.

One evening, I was *gazing* at the ripples in the pond. It was twilight and the small patio was a mass of dense shadows. Everything was so still that I thought I could hear whispering on the other side of the house. I again sensed a person lurking in the darkness, but this time, the man abruptly came out of the shadows and stood before me. I recognized him as the Master of Intent, but before I could say anything he vanished in a flurry of ripples that began with his feet and undulated upward to encompass the top of his head. To my astonishment, he had actually vibrated himself into non-existence right before my eyes. He melted into the darkness as mysteriously as he had appeared.

Before I could become too frightened, Zuleica came and sat beside me on the bench.

"The Master of Intent, just showed you how to merge with the darkness," she said. "Don't be afraid of it. Embrace it. Be one with the night. Become invisible as he is."

I felt something inside me struggle, resist. I did not want to be invisible. I wanted to be recognized and noticed. I was tired of being overlooked. I wished other people would help me get rid of my moroseness and quandaries, not ignore me even more. The memory of my grammar school classmates teasing me, and my teachers criticizing me because I did not speak English, unsettled me. My class mates would say: "What's the matter, a cat got your tongue?" and take turns pulling my pigtail. Then they left me to brood on a bench while they ran off to play jump rope or kickball. I vowed then that I would get the attention I felt I deserved and no longer would be a frightened nobody. My whole life's endeavor was a struggle to fulfill that ambition. Now Zuleica was telling me to become invisible and be a silent, unseen nobody

again,

"A *stalker's* training is in the art of being invisible," Zuleica whispered as if following the drift of my thoughts, "A *stalker* makes herself unobtrusive in all situations, and never calls attention to herself,"

"Never?" I said, remembering the fortune cookie I once had that said: "There is only one thing worse that being talked about, and that's not being talked about."

It was true. It was easier to be criticized or insulted than to be ignored, overlooked. I did not want to not exist. Some part of me fought desperately to survive; it I was a lesser part that settled for criticism rather than oblivion. I would have liked for Carlos and don Juan to have taken time to evaluate my progress or even lack of progress, but they always passed me in the corridors without saying a word.

"Let go," Zuleica said. "Let go of everything. Just let go."

"Why must I?" I said stubbornly.

"So that the energy waves from eternity can tumble you into other realms. They can't reach you if you shield yourself with yourself. Only if you are invisible can the waves affect your *energy body* directly."

Something in me still fought the idea of being invisible.

"Let go of your crappy self," Zuleica snapped.

I heard her say that over and over and as she kept saying it something in me began to give up. I started letting go, although of what I didn't know, but I kept letting go more and more until I became fluffy, like a giant pillow, and when that pillow dissolved, I became a tiny dot lost somewhere in the black vastness, and then I lost awareness of being a dot, and I was nothing.

"Cross over," a voice said. "Let the energy waves of the universe push you over to the other side, to the world where we are."

I followed the voice and heard it talk of a parallel universe almost identical to ours that existed behind a barrier. That barrier was made up of our concerns, our ideas of reality, our energetic affiliation to everyday life, and, fundamentally, to ourselves. Then I heard the voice of Nelida repeating what she had told me seemingly long ago, how not even the body is ours to keep;

that the essence of life is borrowed, not ours to cling to. The essence of life is fluid and our awareness must be also fluid to move with it, or it is forever scattered in the fragmentation of the world into which we were born, but that there is a way out, and that is to let go and be nothing.

I opened my eyes, and saw that I was still sitting on the bench by the pond, but instead of Zuleica, Emilito was there staring at me. So was Carlos and don Juan, Nelida and other people milling about the patio. Food had been set out on a sideboard. I was in the midst of a party going full force. People were having a lively discussion. They were comparing descriptions of their travels, of the things they had seen in the twin universe, as they called it.

“There is a Pope but he isn’t celibate,” Carlos said. “He has a fat and loudmouthed wife.”

“Ah, but does he live in Rome?” don Juan asked cryptically. He seemed to be more relaxed than usual; almost jovial.

Carlos thought for a moment as if it were a trick question.

“I have seen the most exquisite grove of trees,” Emilito interrupted. “They are dark green and enormous. Excellent for tree climbing.”

“I have talked to many people, they are healthy and vital, but totally closed-minded,” don Juan added. “They are unable to imagine or speculate. All their behavior is ritualistic, compulsive and governed by rules.”

“Their language is fascinating,” Carlos continued. “The fundamental unit is not the phoneme based on sound, but a syntactical structural element. Their brains directly impinge on one another in the form of an agreed upon structural framework governed by rules of syntax.”

“I have seen a typewriter that writes with syllables, prefixes and suffices instead of letters. Each key is practically a word in itself,” don Juan said. “That’s something for Taisha to explore.”

I became very exited upon hearing about such a machine. I wanted to know more about it, but other people contributed their descriptions of discoveries they had made about that world. I learned that the people there had a periodic table of chemical elements, but instead of having the usual 52 elements; their world had 76 elements, and some of them were not the same as the ones in our world.

“There are some animals that are very strange,” don Vicente said, “and very unusual plants I had never encountered before. Much of the knowledge for curing comes from this world.”

I had a moment of sudden inspiration. “You’re talking about the realm of the invisible people of the Monte,” I said. “You mean the Yaqui Indians are right? There really is such a world parallel to our own, and magical plants and animals really do exist?”

Don Juan nodded. “The sad part is, however, that for the Yaqui Indians the realm of the invisible is now only a myth. They can catch glimpses of it, but they cannot enter it with the totality of themselves. So for them it must remain only a part of their mythology.”

“Why is that?” I asked.

“Their everyday world has become too real and all-encompassing for them,” don Juan explained. “The door has been sealed shut by a barrier of human concern that they cannot penetrate. However, it was not always like this; but now the western world has impinged on the Yaqui so powerfully that, for them, that door remains forever sealed. All they can do is to relate stories of that world and tell tales of magic and wonder from a bygone time.”

I looked around for Zuleica but she was nowhere in sight. Then I noticed that my surroundings looked somehow different. Although we were in the same house, it was not the same. It looked more like the patio and house did after a long session of gazing at the stones and walls. I couldn’t put my finger on it, but I realized the tiles were not exactly square; they were rhomboid, and there was an ever so slight tilt to the floor and walls. If I had my leveler and plumb line with me, I could have determined their distance from true for certain. As it was, they seemed to be shifting as they did after my sessions of *gazing*.

The tiles were shiny and vibrated causing their shapes to alter every so slightly. The roof beams of the corridor were not parallel as they should have been, and then I noticed that the trees were different too. Larger, fuller, their foliage more dense, and, while I was at it, I noticed the people in the patio. They looked pristine, pure, empty as if they had form but no substance.

Emilito stared at me the way Zuleica had done whenever I was totally preoccupied with something in order to gain my attention. Then I saw him wink at me and nod his head. Suddenly I knew what his secret was, the mysteries he had wanted to reveal to me when I had enough energy to comprehend it. Now I grasped it without him having to tell me. He was Zuleica’s *dreaming body*. That was the reason why Zuleica wasn’t there in the room.

Emilito nodded silently waiting for me to finish with my bubbling realizations. I knew also that

if that was so, then I, too, was in my *dreaming body* and so was everyone in the room and that was why they seemed so sparkling. What's more, the house, the bench, the tables, the food that had been set out in the patio, all were part of another world. I had crossed over into the twin world without even realizing it, and that meant that the discoveries that everyone had been sharing, were not about some inaccessible distant dream world, but about the very reality which we were now inhabiting.

The minute I realized this, Emilito said, “that’s right, Taisha. I am the other side of Zuleica, and you are your dream body, the other side of yourself. You have used the energetic wave from the universe to cross over to the parallel world, the one that exists next to our own.”

I pinched myself to see if I was real, and seemed to be as solid as could be, given my state of excitation and ebullience upon realizing where I was.

“We are in another braid of the universe,” Emilito explained. “The one overlapping with the world of every day life; made up of the same energy only slightly different. Now you know what it means to become invisible, and what it is like to be *stalking* with the *double, a*nd why we always stress sobriety and control. Without control awareness is dispersed. You can do without the self of everyday life, but you can’t do without sobriety and clarity. Awareness must remain intact, no matter where you find yourself so that you can continue to perceive.”

I embraced Emilito and thanked him for all his help. To my surprise, he seemed to be solid, and yet he wasn't, for we encompassed volumes of space, like two gigantic pillows embracing, but the reason I could grasp him, was because I, too, was billowy and without substance.

“But how is it possible that you are a man when Zuleica is a woman?” I asked. “My dream body is not that of a man.” I touched myself quickly to see if what I was saying was true.

“The *nagual* Julian taught us how to move our assemblage points to the position of a man,” Emilito explained. “It was an extraordinary challenge to be male and I took it. It’s so tiresome to have a hole between your legs,” he added with an exaggerated sigh. “It leads to all sorts of outlandish behavior.”

Everyone laughed in agreement, especially the female members of the group. Then I saw Carlos signaling me to come over to him. I realized I had known him forever and now I knew where it was that we had met. It was not in the anthropology department of the university, as I had first thought, but it was here in the twin world which I had visited often. We had done many things on this side, things that were inconceivable from the point of view of the everyday world.

Then I saw a young woman about my age. She was blond, had blue eyes and was petite and very pretty. Her name was Florinda, and she was the ward of the older woman, with the same name, who was Nelida's counterpart.

"You and I are sisters," I said embracing her affectionately, for I recognized her from other encounters, although I could not remember them in detail.

"Remember each other well," don Juan said, "because you'll meet again in the world of everyday life and will have forgotten that you knew each other. You will have to reconstruct this feeling of unbiased affection from scratch."

The *nagual* woman, Carol, whom I remembered seeing before, was there too. She was the young woman who had given Carlos the bread in the bakery in Hermosillo, but I already knew her. She had helped hoist me up into the tree house and had looked after me while I was unconscious for three days and two nights.

"And we also will meet again on the other side," she said, lisping a bit on the word "side." "But we won't forget. We'll always remember that we loved each other," and she embraced me with such genuine affection that an overwhelming emotion enveloped me and I knew we were tied to each other forever across universes.

Don Juan stood the three of us around Carlos and moved our heads together so that they touched. He told us that his task was to make certain through all our training that our assemblage points would be in the same position, and even though our assemblage points would be constantly displaced throughout our training, they would move at the same rate and in the same direction, so that the four of us would function as a single unit and be able to amalgamate a consistent reality that we shared.

"For some time Carol will have to stay on this side with us," he went on. "But you will not really be separated; the bond of energy set up in this world will hold across the boundaries between the twin universes.. You only have to be silent and abandon yourself to know where each of the other is."

I knew what he meant, but I also became frightened. From experience it was evident that the universe was vast and one could easily get lost. I also was aware of my tendency to indulge in self-obsessions and in struggles for independence which could only set up barriers and block the energy holding us together. The most dangerous part was that we would meet again in the world of human affairs, where our power would be minimal, diminished by the concerns of

daily life and the absence of don Juan and the energy of his sorcerer group. We would be operating on a low level awareness, colored by the massive interference of the bulk of humanity with their own obsessions and concerns.

“Florinda will be your companion and act as your counter balance,” don Juan said. “She’ll see to it that you don’t indulge too much. If you do, she will be at your throat like a ferocious jaguar.”

Florinda let out a growl and clicked her teeth together repeatedly in a biting motion. Everyone laughed.

“Better watch out, or she’ll be at your throat,” don Juan warned.

“And I will never be at your throat,” Carol said soothingly.

“Listen to Florinda; she is more sober than you. The two of you will flank the new nagual, and journey with him, perfecting yourselves until Carol Tiggs returns.”

“When will she come back?” I asked.

"Only power can decide that,” don Juan replied, “and your impeccability.” He paused for a moment. “If you want to see your loved one again. Be impeccable. Do your *recapitulation* and don’t think about yourselves.”

Carol gave us a wistful smile urging us on.

“I’m counting on you, Taisha,” she whispered so no one could hear. “You will pull me and I will pull you. Agreed?”

I nodded but wordlessly asked, how? She showed me her left hand. She was wearing a gold and diamond ring that looked like a tiny monstrance. She told me to gaze at it for a moment and to remember it always, because one day, she would give it to me as a sign that we had been together before.

“In the world of everyday life, it is so easy to forget,” she said. “Tokens of proof are always welcome.”

“I’ll never forget,” I swore, embracing her. “I’ll pull you with my affection.”

“This afternoon you have enough energy to grasp the truth of the twin universe as a bona fide realm of existence,” don Juan said, “but it’s not that easy to cross over with your body. You can catch glimpses of it in dreams, but to come here with the totality of yourself takes years of training and storing energy, and even then, there are countless obstacles and no guarantees.”

“Then I won’t go back,” I said. “I’ll stay here with all of you.”

“That’s not possible,” he said sternly, “You have to perfect yourself in the world of human beings. You have to begin from that point and journey here.”

“Why?”

“Because that is were the bulk of your energy is rooted, besides there is no advantage of being on this side, A *stalker* must be fluid so that you can move anywhere. You must be at ease and impeccable no matter where you are; in this world, or in the one in which you live, or in any other place in the infinite band of possibilities that makes us sentient beings.”

“Leave the self behind, and you can go anywhere,” Carol said. “Your task is to dissolve everything that makes a human being grounded in the world of human beings.”

“Then, I’ll leave everything here,” I said.

Don Juan smiled. He advised me that while we were in the everyday world, all the energy gleaned from *recapitulating* and impeccable actions would be able to cross over to be stored here with them. Carol would remain to act as a beacon and to help consolidate our *double*. The more impeccable we were and the less emphasis we placed on our personal selves, the more we would strengthen our other side, or *energy body*.

“You will be like squirrels gathering nuts for the winter,” Carol said. “Your energetic selves will get stronger and more concise, until one day you will be able to tip the scales and find the entirety of your being on this side with nothing left for the world of the human apes.”

That day, she said, we would become invisible to the human eye and we would consolidate the totality of ourselves on the other side.

It was all crystal clear. I knew now the importance of the sorcerers’ training; the *recapitulation* was to rid oneself of one’s remembered past and to release one’s trapped energy; losing self-importance prevented one from placing undue energy on the fabricated social self, thereby making it into a permanent feature. The sorcery passes enable one to dissolve the solidity of

one's body and purify it energetically. Losing personal history frees one from the compulsion of relating oneself to a single mode of being, and prevents us from being pinned down by others with their thoughts and expectations.

To test one's progress and transformation, sorcerers use petty tyrants they find in their daily world. In this way, they make certain that change isn't merely an ideal but an actual bodily metamorphoses on a fundamental *energetic level*. By regarding the world as *controlled folly*, a *stalker* is assured of not becoming entangled with human concerns. Only in this way can one liberate enough energy and become fluid to move with one's body into the twin world.

Quieting the internal dialogue through the *gazing* techniques has a triple purpose. First, it blocks the reinforcement and affirmations we constantly give ourselves that the world is such and such. Second, it enables us to store the energy needed to make the crossing. Third and finally, it creates an opening in our *energetic bodies* so that the waves from the universe can tumble us over to the other side.

I thought of what Zuleica had said about letting go and becoming invisible. Now I knew why everything that is human had to be abandoned. Sorcerers utilize the same methods as do the phenomenoiogists, such as suspending judgment, questioning the taken for granted aspects of space and time, but sorcerers do not merely describe phenomena but are able to actually transcend reality. Reality is constituted by the existence and condition of our sense apparatus that enable us to perceive the world. Sorcerers, by deliberately and consistently enhancing that capacity for perception through storing energy, liberate themselves from the imprisonment of a single mode of being. Sorcery is really the capacity to perceive more than the average person.

"Taisha is philosophizing even in the twin world," Emilito said out loud.

"Let her conceptualize and speculate all she wants," don Juan said. "Someday she will be able to live her realizations. Besides, it means she and Carlos will get along famously. We all know how he is given to analysis and conceptual interpretations."

"Like the nagual Elias before us," Emilito said.

Don Juan nodded.

"Well, then let Taisha speculate on this," Emilito said. "The here and there of the tree house."

I turrned to face him. His eyes were glowing with the excitement of a revelation. With a nodding of his head he coaxed me to think about it. I was at a loss as to what he was referring

to.

“Living in the tree house, gave you a different perspective on here and there,” he said.

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“There was no horizon in your world,” he said bringing his face so close to mine that his features became blurred.

It dawned on me then that half of Clara’s house, the grounds at the front part of her place, including the giant trees and the tree house, had all existed in the twin world. I had already spend many months of my training on this side. No wonder Emilito had insisted that I recapitulate again, saying I had to do it several times for there were many layers of existence to break through. I had to do it once with my everyday body and again with the *double*.

What’s more, Emilito was right; my extended stay in the treehouse and the trees, had altered the relationship between my body and the ground. My *assemblage point*, or center for organizing perception, had been displaced to another point on my *energetic body*, thereby enabling me to experience different special and temporal relationships.

Now that I focused my attention on it, I remembered that the foliage of many of the trees was so thick: that the sky as well as the horizon were completely obscured. Perception of the world in the trees was not laid out in terms of distant and close space. Rather everything was immediate, intimately related to my body. It was a superb training to expand the limits of my awareness of space. The more I climbed the trees, the more fluid my assemblage point became, until I could swing from branch to branch feeling no separation between myself, and my surroundings.

It gave me a new perspective on the world, totally different from the one I had while I was on the ground. In order to climb the trees, I had to match my physicality with that of the branches and leaves. My entire existence was determined by the here and now. For any distraction could have caused a lost of balance and a fall to my death. At any given moment, all of me was focused on a specific concern; that of maneuvering through the branches. Past, future, and the far away had all merged into a single point: the immediate now, which was governed by my particular task at hand.

I had dissolved my old mode of being in the world through my first *recapitulation* in the cave, and I had incorporated a new one, that of a tree dweller, by never leaving the trees. I experienced a new bodily solidity that at times would express itself in an intense feeling of

claustrophobia. I could dispel this by either merging with the trees energetically, or by creating a new experience of space or time, in which case my body had to dissolve the branches around me and move beyond them. I did this through a second *recapitulation*, which expanded my temporal horizon; and through practicing the bodily movements Emilito would periodically show me from the ground, which expanded my spacial horizon.

"You recapitulated in the trees, practiced *dreaming* and *intending* in the trees and even were able to do movements outside the trees leaping with your *energetic body* into a different realm," Emilito reminded me. "All this is *stalking* with the *double*. It was made possible by abandoning the memory of the limits of the physical self."

"You moved from the trees to another reality," don Juan said. "A realm which is inaccessible from the world of everyday life. You used *intending* to catapult you from one braid of the universe to another. Now you know what we mean when we say that *intending* is the wings that carry a sorcerer across the span of eternity. Soon my party will be leaving on those wings, but we will meet again, somewhere in the folds of *dreaming* and from there catapult ourselves to freedom."

I wanted to ask him when and where they would be going and more specifically how we would catapult ourselves to freedom, but my *dreaming* energy was waning. I knew I would be waking up soon in the world of every day life, and there, I would forget most of what had transpired here. It would be like a vivid dream, fragmented for a short while, then it would fade and merge with the dense fog that separated the twin universes.

"I have to go now," I said. "I don't suppose you could keep me here with you?"

"No." don Juan said firmly. "If you come it will have to be on the wings of *intent* blown by your own fluidity."

I thought of Nelida's advice of always saying goodbye to each moment because it would never again return. She caught the drift of my thoughts.

"Impeccability is saying hello, thank you and goodbye all in one moment through your superb actions," she said as she embraced me. "That way you will always be at ease, with no regrets, and with nothing pending."

I nodded. It summed up everything I felt in a nutshell so that nothing more needed to be said. I looked at everyone, trying to incorporate them in my gazing memory before they faded into the fog.

I woke up, gradually becoming solid again. I was laying in my bed in Zuleica's house, numb and disoriented, and then I remembered bits and pieces of a giant mosaic. I knew that another world existed, a world that was as real as the one I had learned to call my own. I knew that I was nothing. That whatever I thought I was, is a fabrication, a temporary consolidation of components held together by a force for some effect, but it could never be taken for real. There was another reality, parallel to our own, and it too wasn't real. The position of our assemblage points was everything. It amalgamated worlds upon worlds and enabled us to experience them as our world, as the world.

The world of everyday life was only one perceptual possibility out of an infinite number of possibilities that make up existence. The *stalkers* training is to be fluid, invisible without attachment to self and things, so that one could shift back and forth at ease without losing energy or getting lost.

Living in the world of everyday life was like being a student in a class. I had to give a good presentation, I had to appear that I knew what I was talking about, that I meant what I said. I needed to strive for order and coherence, but when the class was over, whatever was said meant nothing, it was only an orderly structure created for that moment and not meant to ever be taken seriously as something real or believable. It was an exercise which had tb be discarded when the need was over so that one could move on in a never ending journey.

So it was with the twin reality. It was made up of people and animals and vegetation just like our world, only different. The grove of trees in Clara's house, the tree house, Emilito and myself all had been part of the twin world. I realized I had spent entire stretches of time there without even knowing it. I had been able to enter it under the power of don Juan and his group of sorcerers who trained me.

He and his group of sorcerers, through a lifetime of training, stored enough energy to cross back and forth without losing their awareness, their control and sobriety. With training I, too, would be able to make the great crossing and have enough energy not only to perceive the twin world but to hold that position of the assemblage point long enough to remember it in detail, and with added energy to be able to describe the place and the path so that the listener on this side would be able to comprehend them and perhaps even to make that journey himself.

Carlos came into the room where I had awoken. He examined my eyes to see if I was myself again and nodded satisfied. He told me to go get my things together, for we were returning to Los Angeles. A new academic year would be starting soon, and it would not be auspicious to miss the first day of classes.

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Editor's Note

This text is a best effort to produce a "finished" version of Taisha Abelar's unpublished manuscript, that can currently be found at https://archive.org/details/taisha-book. Any and all changes made, were intended to further enhance the manuscript and, as such, changes from the original scan have been minimized and focused on giving this book the same professional demeanor of the published works of Carlos Castaneda, Taisha Abelar, and Florinda Donner-Grau.

The apocryphal history of this work, which has been highly anticipated by Castaneda and Abelar fans and followers for decades now, is almost entirely outside of the scope of this commentary. However, apparently the unpublished manuscript was disseminated to women trainees in workshops and private classes in 1996. Years later, a typewritten copy made it's way under a scanner, and thus we have a scanned ".PDF" file!

To untrained eyes, the original manuscript appears to have been a work in progress at the time when work on this manuscript stopped. In the original scan, a page is missing, which, unfortunately, we will just have to live with. The page would have been numbered 150 in the original manuscript. In addition, the original scan has two chapter 15's, 16's, and 17's, that are roughly all of the same length. However, they all have unique content and were retained, kept in the order presented, and renumbered sequentially.

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